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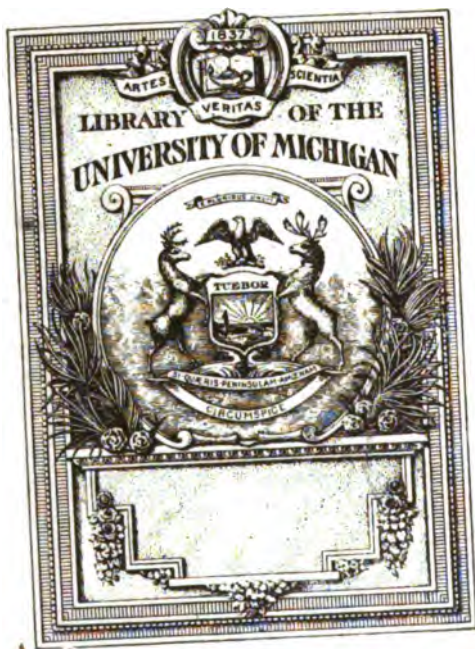
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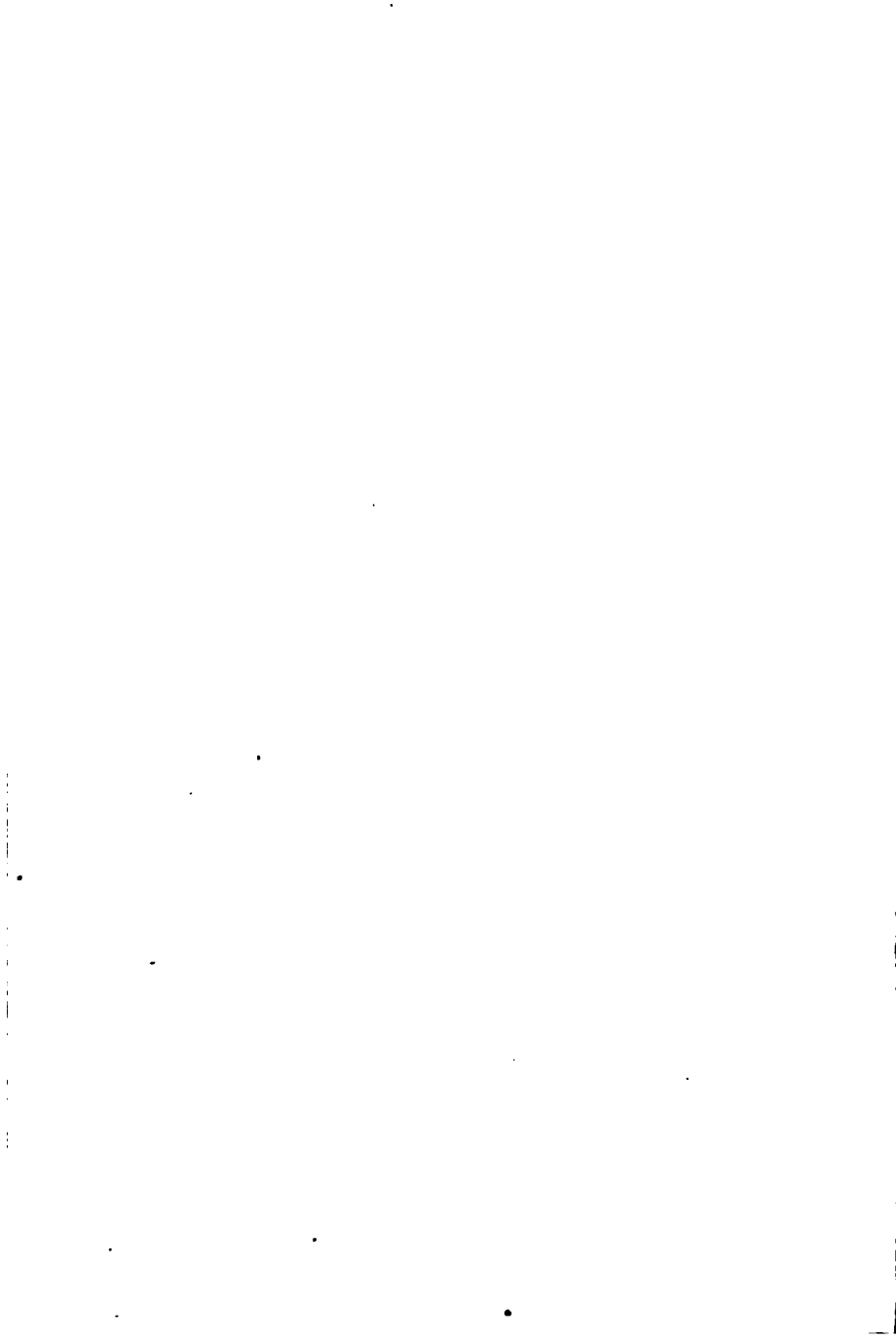
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**MORCHESTER**





# MORCHESTER

A STORY OF AMERICAN SOCIETY  
POLITICS, AND AFFAIRS


BY

CHARLES DATCHET

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NEW YORK & LONDON  
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**MORCHESTER**





# MORCHESTER

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## Chapter I

### MISS ELLERTON WITNESSES A CASUALTY

The accidents of life are the framework of the structure; we fill in the intervening spaces as we are able.

**M**ORCHESTER has been an important city of the Middle States for at least three generations. The encyclopædias say that it is well situated for many kinds of manufacture and for commerce; that it has a long water front, and can be reached by vessels of considerable size.

Washington Street runs from the water through the heart of the city to rough fields that have lost the bloom of the country and gathered only the litter of the town. Midway between down-town and out-of-town this street is lined with blocks of substantial houses; to occupy one of these dwellings is presumptive evidence of opulence if not of position.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century there lived at No. 621 Washington Street Mrs. Thurlow Thane and her niece, Mary Ellerton, the only child of Francis and Elizabeth Ellerton of New York. Mrs.

Ellerton had died when her daughter was in her twelfth year, and for twelve years more Mary had lived with her father—at home, abroad, or wherever their fancy called them—until he also died, leaving her with no nearer kin than his sister, Mrs. Thane.

Mr. Ellerton was an unobtrusive man of quiet tastes. He was fond of reading and of travel; indifferent to ordinary appeals to ambition, but conscious of powers that he liked to feel rather than to exhibit. He had inherited a moderate fortune, sufficient to gratify his wants, and apparently he had kept it intact without materially adding to it. He seemed to have no particular calling but to be a man out of business, living at ease.

Of the property to which he fell heir, while still young, there was a large block of shares, then yielding no income, and appraised in distribution at a nominal sum. After lying for a few years in his safe-deposit box they suddenly increased greatly in value, and he was able to sell them at high prices. This windfall he set aside for purposes of speculation, with a resolve—that, as it happened, was easily kept—never to hazard any other part of his fortune. He was cool by temperament, intelligent, and patient; he took no one into his confidence and never incurred a risk that embarrassed him. In the end he succeeded in accumulating, as the result of good judgment and of constant additions of income to capital, a very large estate, the existence of which was scarcely suspected by any one except his confidential broker and friend, Eugene Lawton.

When Mr. Ellerton found that he was probably to

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die within a year or two, he explained his affairs to his daughter and took great pains to instruct her concerning the care of money; also to inculcate his peculiar views about property. He showed her the annoyances and dangers of allowing the possession of wealth to be known, and dwelt upon the advantages of avoiding a complex life. He made her his sole legatee and executrix, and urged her never to reveal even to Mr. Lawton, who was to be her adviser, nor to her lawyer, nor to any one except her husband, any more than should be necessary of her private affairs. While he still lived he funded a million of dollars in United States bonds and put these in her possession by a deed of gift.

Two days after her father's funeral Mary Ellerton went to Morchester with Mrs. Thane, leaving the house in New York in charge of servants. Mrs. Thane, who was a widow, had for some years lived alone, her two children, a son and a daughter, having married and left her. Between this lady and the Ellertons there had been neither sympathy nor discord. Without common interests or a warm family affection, their intercourse had been limited to rare visits, which had led to an esteem that had never mellowed to intimacy. Mrs. Thane supposed that her niece would have an income more than sufficient for her support, but not one in itself to make her a person of consequence.

The elder lady was inclined to let the expectation of finding a companion weigh more with her than the chances of any derangements that a new inmate of her house might effect in her habits. She assumed

that Mary would live with her and make of her a confidante and adviser; she was, therefore, not a little surprised and disconcerted to find that her niece did not take these things quite so much for granted. The questions Mrs. Thane asked, at first without hesitation, about her brother's affairs were met with a reserve that although inoffensive was difficult to penetrate, without an appearance of curiosity about another person's private concerns. It soon appeared that it was by no means certain that Miss Ellerton intended to remain permanently in Morchester.

At the end of a fortnight, however, after skilful diplomacy upon both sides, an understanding was reached to the effect that Miss Mary Ellerton was a sovereign power in alliance with Mrs. Thurlow Thane, each to enjoy all the rights and privileges belonging to complete autonomy. That this result should have been attained without a suggestion of hostilities was to the credit of both, and spoke well for their good sense and their manners.

Nearly three months passed, in which Miss Ellerton was frequently in New York, and almost dumb as to the business that took her there, before she finally announced that with the assistance of her father's lawyer she had so far settled the affairs of the estate as to feel that for the present matters were arranged to her satisfaction. Mrs. Thane then formally invited her to consider the existing arrangement a permanent one and the invitation was accepted.

No. 621 Washington Street was a corner house; Miss Ellerton's rooms fronted on the side street. Early one morning, nearly two years after she had

## Miss Ellerton Witnesses a Casualty 5

gone to live with Mrs. Thane, she was taking a first peep through the shutters to see what the day promised, when, hearing the clangour of a fire engine coming up K Street, she waited at the window to see it pass. A single waggon, like a doctor's buggy, was approaching from the opposite direction. It contained two men; the one driving was past the prime of life, yet he looked strong and determined; the other was a young man, well set up, with a clean-cut air and a resolute mouth. "Father and son," she thought.

On came the engine—its big horses at full gallop, its wheels grinding and ringing on the street-car rails, its gong sounding, grey smoke pouring from its funnel. The young man turned and spoke to his companion, who answered only by a shake of the head as he shortened his hold upon the reins; evidently their horse was not altogether to be trusted. A moment more and the engine was upon them. The brute's courage gave way; he stopped short, quivering and staring, then backed, reared, and spun around. It was too late for the heavy machine to sheer off; it crashed into the buggy and threw it over.

Mary caught her breath as she saw the younger man shot almost under the wheels of the engine—between it and the horse, which was down, but struggling to get up. His fore feet were already planted to rise when the man lying by the track lifted his head, suddenly rolled over, and, with extraordinary quickness, seized the horse by the off fetlock joint and jerked his leg from under him. The horse fell on

his side, and in another moment the man had him by the head.

A crowd gathered at once. Some one took the young man's place, leaving him free to go to him who lay motionless under the shattered waggon. As Miss Ellerton's eyes followed, they fell upon an upturned face, ashy and still, and upon a little pool on the asphalt, beside the head. She closed the shutter and stood with her face in her hands long enough to draw a deep breath; then gathering up the folds of her wrapper, she went swiftly to the door and ran down-stairs to the dining-room. The butler and the parlour maid were at the window; she put them aside and leaning out asked a man on the sidewalk to offer the use of the house—"Tell them to bring him in here; we will do anything we can." She called another man and told him to go to No. 540 Washington Street for Dr. Keene—"Say you were sent by Miss Ellerton; that there has been an accident; that he must come immediately."

So many eyes were now turned to the window that Miss Ellerton drew back. When she looked again, she saw that the horse was up and loosened from the wreck of the waggon, which had been drawn to the curb. The injured man still lay upon the asphalt; a rug had been put under his head, and his son, if it was his son, was kneeling beside him, holding his hand and stooping to listen.

At that moment a gentleman came up and, with a brief "I am a surgeon," was down at once, making an examination. He shook his head and said something, inaudible to the girl at the window. The

## Miss Ellerton Witnesses a Casualty 7

young man facing him turned heavily to the bystanders: "Men, my father is dead; help me to carry him." The inert body was lifted, the son supporting the head, and carried to a house a little way up the street on the opposite side, the door of which the surgeon opened with a key.

It was all over for Miss Ellerton; she had been of no use; it was not even Dr. Keene who had come. She went back to her room and sat for some time looking dejectedly at the opposite houses. She was shocked by what she had seen; she had a vigorous temperament and she had lost an opportunity for action.

## Chapter II

### MRS. NETHERBY HAS MORNING CALLERS

Opportunity is an embarrassment of the competent.

MRS. JULIAN NETHERBY was Morchester's most available woman; if judiciously "approached," she could be turned to almost any public or private use consistent with her standing as a person of character and position. If a quasi-prince visited the city, she could be depended upon to maintain its credit by giving a reception or a ball in his honour; if a brilliant but indigent foreigner came with proper credentials, her drawing-room was at his service for a lecture or a recital that, however imperfectly it was enjoyed by others, gave him the fine satisfaction of converting talents into cash. Were the managers of a charity at their wit's end to extinguish a deficit, to her was assigned the task of persuading half a hundred young women to prepare at their own expense fantastic costumes, and of inducing their friends and relatives to pay for the pleasure of seeing the girls parade in them. Any one wanting to meet any one else could easily manage it, if one of Mrs. Netherby's acquaintances. She was available to preside at meetings; to start a subscription; to serve on boards. She could, and would, if the appeal



was strong enough, make relatively easy the way of those who strove for social recognition—not that she held an autocratic position, but because she would take more trouble to make her point than other people cared to take to prevent her from doing so.

Mr. Netherby, although occasionally utilised to fill a place at the dinner table—left vacant by a man called unexpectedly out of town,—was, on the whole, from the point of view of most of his wife's visitors, a negligible quantity. Nobody had the least idea what he did with himself, and nobody particularly cared. Mrs. Netherby's activities were familiar to every newspaper compositor in Morchester. Mr. Netherby was a mere name to be coupled sometimes with that of his wife.

People to whom Mrs. Netherby accorded personal and particular interviews were commonly received in the library on the second floor of her ample house. One morning in the early part of April, 1896, a gentleman named Russell Churchill—Russell for Mrs. Netherby—stood by the mantelpiece in this room and preferred a request. Would she be good enough to do what was possible in the way of making Miss Ellerton have a better time?

"I see her, you know, now and then, because I go to the house occasionally as I have always; but she ought to meet more people, to be brought out and made to do things."

"What has Mrs. Thane done for her?"

"Very little, I think, beyond putting her in the way of good works and giving for her social advantage one or two elderly and massive dinners."

"Which were not inspiriting?"

"I went to one of them; I did not find it lively—John T. Grant and Mrs. Grant, the Huddlestons, and so on."

Mrs. Netherby owned the remains of a girlish archness, which she preserved carefully for the benefit of special friends; she gave Churchill a private view as she said:

"Now, Russell, you have been here three-quarters of an hour, under the pretence of having one of our old-time talks, when it was really your interest in another woman that brought you."

"Put it the other way: after three-quarters of an hour's pleasure ought I not to give five minutes to philanthropy?"

"What do you want me to do for her?"

"As if I could tell you what to do! Can't you put her in the way of knowing some interesting people and make it a little gayer for her? Get her more into things, whether she wants to or not. I suspect she is being bored to desperation. The only excitement she has had since she came to Morchester was in seeing Mr. Marshall killed. You know the accident happened in K Street, just under her window; she chanced to be up and saw it."

"You mean she actually saw the accident?"

"Yes, every detail, and went down to see if she could do anything."

"He was killed instantly, was he not?"

"Undoubtedly. Dr. Furnival, who lives a few doors up on K Street, was dressing, saw something

had happened, hurried on the rest of his clothes, and was on the spot in five minutes. Mr. Marshall was dead when he got there."

"Are not you and Teddy Marshall particular friends?"

Mrs. Netherby spoke in this easy way of a great many people to whom, when they were present, she was a little more formal. Churchill paused a moment, looking her over rather deliberately, as she sat there on the other side of the fireplace, with her head thrown back onto the roll of a stuffed chair. He knew that her acquaintance with Theodore Marshall was of the slightest, and there was something in the woman that suggested odd contrasts between her and the man she spoke of.

"I am," he answered, "and take him for all in all, of the men I know, he is the one best worth having as a friend, Horatio."

"What?"

"I said Horatio, but I meant Mrs. Netherby."

"Horatio? Oh, yes, I see."

Perhaps she did not see, but Churchill ignored the possibility; he said:

"He is an awfully good fellow, and he is in a hard position. I believe the business has not been going very well; he has it all to look after now; and he has a lot of money to pay over to his sister."

"How does that come about?"

"There are only two of them, you know, Theodore and Emily; their father left a will, made when times were better, leaving Emily a lump sum and Theodore the rest. I fancy there is not much now except the

mill property; if that does not pay, the situation is a difficult one."

"How much is Emily to have?"

"Three hundred thousand dollars, I believe, and the house in Grove Street."

"Emily will have to wait."

"No, I doubt that; if it can be done, Theodore will borrow the money and pay it over, no matter what comes after."

"Is Thedy a good business man?"

"I don't know; he has ability and knowledge and courage and industry, but I am not sure he will ever be rated a good business man."

"What more does he want?"

"Nothing; it is what he has that stands in his way."

"And that is——?"

"Why, I am afraid that he is more than indifferent honest, which is something of a handicap, you must admit."

"Dear me, what a cynic. Don't you think you had better go now; I really have too much to do to give you an entire morning."

"I am grateful for what I have received; good-bye; you won't forget about Miss Ellerton?"

Mrs. Netherby said she would see what could be done, and Churchill escaped. On his way to the street he met Mr. Michael Le Mark, a gentleman about whom he had prejudices. As for Le Mark, no way had ever occurred to him of utilising Churchill, so they passed with the hollowest of civilities.

Mrs. Netherby received her new visitor with more

effusion than she had shown to the gentleman that had just left her. Le Mark was a very important person; he represented a family connection—Le Marks, Plunketts, and Griswolds—identified with the town from its earliest times and standing for everything known to Morchester as stable and valuable—from the point of view of the children of this world as distinguished from the children of light. Mrs. Netherby had risen from her chair; she was smiling, and ready with a much bejewelled hand.

"Good-morning, Mr. Le Mark, I am very glad to see you; I sent that young man off at the right moment."

"Good-morning; I need not ask if you are well. Yes, young Churchill, was it not? Pardon me, that is a remarkable ruby; may I look at it? It is a finer stone, I think, than the one Marcus showed me the last time I was in New York. He asked a great price for it."

Mrs. Netherby was pleased, and indicated a chair as she again took her own. Her distinguished guest placed it to suit him, and being seated proceeded to business.

"I came to ask a favour—of you, because no one else is so competent, and because you are always willing to do a public service. I believe you know about our boulevard plans. We propose—I think I consulted you about this before—we propose to place an art museum on Boulevard Marshall—named after the Chief Justice, you understand,—using that fine piece of ground where the old Sanford house stood. We need six hundred thousand dollars to buy the land

and put up the building; half of the money will have to be raised by private subscriptions conditioned upon getting an appropriation for the rest. We must have the city thoroughly waked up about the matter, and it has been thought best to have a loan exhibition next winter, some time before Christmas. We want to make it a great affair. I think we can get the Mayor to open the exhibition and commit himself to the museum so that later we can count upon him. Some one with personal influence must see that we get out the valuable pictures. May I say you will be one of the patronesses, and chairman of a committee of ladies to ask for the canvases? There will have to be a little quiet work done first to find out what is worth borrowing. You know so well how to do that sort of thing. Will you undertake it?"

"But, my dear friend, I am up to my eyes in things now; I don't know how I can possibly find the time."

"This is to be next winter," Le Mark interjected; "naturally there will be something to do before you go away, but there is not much going on now, and you will surely have a little time for us; a little of your time and your name go a great way. The thing must be done or we cannot hope to get the money. Let me urge you to say you will act."

Mrs. Netherby paused a decent interval, as if weighing possibilities, and then nodded assent. "If I must, I suppose I must."

Le Mark showed his gratification by leaning forward and pressing the bejewelled hand.

"I knew you would not fail us; you are a public benefactor; you have laid me under a personal obli-

gation. I will come in any day next week that suits you to go over some details. Just one thought occurs to me now: I think Mrs. Thurlow Thane has a niece who lives with her—a Miss Ellerton. I understand that her father was a lover of the fine arts; the daughter was abroad with him a great deal; possibly you could make of her a useful aid; at all events she needs to be brought out a little,—do you not think so?"

Le Mark was going on, but Mrs. Netherby smiled—in fact she laughed—in a way that checked him. She hastened to explain.

"It is nothing, but I could not help being amused; you are the second man who has been here to-day with suggestions about relieving the tedium of Miss Ellerton's existence."

"And the other one?" asked Le Mark, raising his eyebrows.

"Your friend, Russell Churchill," she answered. "He is very much troubled about her; he says that the only excitement she has had in two years was in seeing that shocking accident in which Mr. Marshall was killed. It occurred just under her window."

"Does he know her?"

"Apparently; I believe he has always been in the habit of going to the house. He does something for Mrs. Thane—helps her with her model libraries for schools, I think it is; and he is quite posted about the accident because he is young Theodore Marshall's special friend. Do you suppose that Miss Ellerton is dependent upon Mrs. Thane?"

Le Mark seemed not to be listening as attentively

as he might, at least he did not find a relative answer to Mrs. Netherby's last question.

"Well," he said cheerfully, "let us hope that Morchester will soon do better by the young lady. If you have an opportunity, why not sound her as to her willingness to enter a little more into our larger interests? And talking of large interests, I wish you would tell me what to do with a lot of idle money for which I am trustee; that is not in your line though?"

Mrs. Netherby remembered what Churchill had said about the necessities of Theodore Marshall, but she did not care to venture a suggestion that might detract from a hard-earned reputation for shrewdness, so she held her peace. Le Mark saw that he had given her something to think about, and rose to go.

"It is delightfully refreshing to come in here and have a quiet talk with you, but I must not take any more of your time; mine is pretty well filled up to-day. As soon as I can make some preliminary arrangements I shall write again for another appointment. I wish you would show that stone to Marcus some time. Good-bye."

As Le Mark looked at his watch after the street door had closed behind him, he said, with that absence of excitement that belongs to the habit of success: "Not so bad, two birds with one stone."



## Chapter III

### THE LAWRENCES AND A VENTURE IN MUNIFICENCE

"This life more sweet  
Than that of painted pomp."

THERE is a part of Morchester where the houses are not built together in blocks, but stand separately, each with its own little area of turf bounded by trim hedges or fences of iron rods. There are also gardens in the rear, with shrubs, and trees—some of them country-born, though now, in their hale age, the children of a city play in the shade where formerly cattle came of summer afternoons to drowse and chew the cud.

The site of the College of Morchester is in this pleasant neighbourhood, and the president's house is in an angle of the grounds, which are of considerable extent. To judge by the result, these must have been laid out with a nice perception of the effects possible with lawns and trees on an undulating surface; a better bit of landscape gardening is not readily found.

The president of the college in our time was Dr. Wilson Lawrence—of whom a word. Immediately after he was graduated at Yale in 1861, he had enlisted as a private in a Massachusetts regiment. At

the close of the war with the South he held a captaincy in the regular army, won by gallantry in the field and by intelligent fidelity to duty. In 1865 he resigned and went to Germany for further study; three years later he took his doctorate in philosophy and returned to the United States to teach. His first appointment was in the college over which he finally came to preside. It is significant of his reputation in Morchester that John Marshall, a man who had passed his life in active and exacting business, should have chosen him as joint trustee with the Morchester Trust and Investment Company to care for the fortune of his daughter Emily.

Dr. Lawrence had two daughters, Margaret and Frances. Margaret and Emily Marshall had been schoolmates, and some six weeks after Mr. Marshall's death Emily went to visit the Lawrences, with the promise of as much retirement as she wished, but enough companionship to make her life a little less desolate than it was in the lonely house in Grove Street, to which her brother hardly went except for the night.

On the evening of a day shortly after Churchill and Le Mark had made morning calls upon Mrs. Netherby, Theodore Marshall dined with the Lawrences and his sister. After the incessant cares that had lately pressed upon him, it was like heaven to sit down to a well ordered meal in a house where no one seemed hurried or anxious, where all was good to look at, and serenity seemed to abide.

With Mrs. Lawrence there were six at table. Edward, the only other member of the family, was at

Yale, where his father had been wise enough to send him. As Marshall had taken a Bachelor's degree at Morchester before going to a technical school to prepare himself for his father's business, he and the Doctor were old friends. A part of the satisfaction with which the young man took his seat and unfolded his napkin was due to the fact that he always felt distinctly grateful, if also a little awed, when near Margaret Lawrence. I do not think he was in love with her at this time, but he certainly admired her in a way that was perilously near to it; as well he might, for she was almost as beautiful as her mother, and very close to her father in sympathies and fundamental traits of character. Fanny, who sat opposite Marshall, was the youngest of the family—a little girl still, of whom we shall see more hereafter.

When the Doctor turned to Emily, who sat on his right, and asked if it had ever occurred to her how fortunate it was that people got hungry at least once a day, and she, nodding her head at her brother, said it depended a good deal upon what time of day it was, Marshall had a vision of seven-o'clock breakfasts, belated dinners, and a rather cross little sister, that made the situation of the moment appear the acme of civilisation.

Mrs. Lawrence said that if hunger were a thing of only once a day she might recognise a blessing, but she had never noticed any such moderation in her family circle. The Doctor protested that it was rather hard that the profound generalisations he was about to make should be received in a spirit of levity. He had been prepared to prove that the pangs of

hunger, felt at least once in twenty-four hours, were the primal cause of any order existing in society; that all regularity in human affairs might be referred to the daily recurring necessity that Polly should put the kettle on, "while greasy Joan doth keel the pot." He would like at least to say, if he were not permitted to deal adequately with the subject, that the need of a dinner and the convenience of serving a common meal for several persons had resulted in the institution of dining, for which he had a profound respect, provided he was allowed to dine at home without any nonsense.

"Yes, dear," Mrs. Lawrence retorted; "but as in that case there would be none of us here for you to talk to I am afraid your respect for dining is limited."

The Doctor turned again to Emily: "Did you notice that I was talking nonsense?"

Emily looked a little confused and was on the point of speaking without knowing quite what to say, when Margaret leaned across to her.

"Please ask him for a definition of nonsense; I want one for information, and he can't refuse to answer you on your first day here."

"Nonsense," said the Doctor, "is like fish-sauce; if good enough it may delude you into finding sole in a flounder."

"Papa," asked Fanny, in a singularly clear and sweet little voice, "what did you say greasy Joan did to the pot? Did she keel it? What does 'keel' mean?"

"Suppose you ask Mr. Marshall, Fan," replied her father; "he looks very wise."

She turned inquiring eyes to Marshall, who answered: "I might know, Fanny, if I had been properly educated. You had better ask Edward when he comes home."

The Doctor was quite grave as he said: "You see, Fan, I undertook to educate Mr. Marshall, but he has turned out so badly that I thought it better to let some one else take Ned in hand."

Fanny was not deceived. "I thought you said one day, Papa, that you sent Ned to Yale because you wanted him to knock about in a big place—that he could get his education afterwards."

The Doctor bit his lip; Mrs. Lawrence and Marshall exchanged glances and found it hard not to laugh outright. Mrs. Lawrence whispered to Fanny, who slipped out of the room.

"You see, Marshall," said the Doctor, as she disappeared, "how difficult it is to bring up one's own children, let alone other people's, and how delicate a matter is the making of fish-sauces; sometimes they curdle and the result is appalling."

Margaret came to her father's rescue: "Mr. Marshall understands why you sent Edward to Yale; you wanted to get him out of an atmosphere in which he had lived all his life into a different one. If you had been president of Yale, you might have sent him somewhere else."

Her father looked at her whimsically. "Thank you, Madge; we will agree to think it possible that I might have sent him to Morchester. How now, Fan?"—to the culprit, as she came back to her place at table.

"It's to keep cool, to stir what's in the pot."

"Where did you find it?" asked her father.

"Mamma told me to look in the *Century*. It gives just what you said: 'while greasy Joan doth keel the pot.'"

Marshall was expressing to Margaret his satisfaction at having learned something, admitting that he had never known the precise meaning of "keel" in connection with a pot, although Joan, and Marian with her unfortunate nose, and Dick and Tom were valued friends, when the Doctor was called out to sign a receipt for a registered letter. He brought it back with him and asked permission to open it. Mrs. Lawrence was evidently quite willing to know what it was about. As her husband's eyes met hers a moment later he looked rather bewildered, and she asked:

"What is it? Nothing disagreeable, I hope."

"My dear," he said, "it is a letter from a New York bank announcing a gift to the college library fund; would you like to hear it?"

There was general acquiescence, and he read:

MY DEAR SIR:

We have the pleasure of informing you that there has been put in our hands the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars which we are directed to place to your credit, subject to check, upon the receipt from you of a letter assuring us that there will be no inquiry upon your part as to the donor of this money, and that it will be used for the immediate and future needs of the library of the College of Morchester. No other condition is imposed, but the donor requests that there shall be as little publicity as possible given to the matter of the gift.

"I shall be very much obliged," the Doctor said gravely, "if none of you will say anything about this letter; I think the request of the giver should be scrupulously respected."

Mrs. Lawrence spoke for the table: "No one will say a word, dear; but who can have been so considerate? It is the thing you have most at heart—to strengthen the library; it is too good to be true."

"Perhaps it may not be true," the Doctor returned, "but it has a very genuine look, and I must say such an act goes far towards giving one a good opinion of a naughty world. I have not the remotest idea who is doing this thing; and if there is any one here present who does know, or even suspect, where the money comes from, I recommend to that person extreme discretion."

As during this speech the Doctor glanced round the table, coming last to Margaret, a slow flush rose to her forehead. Her father looked at her inquisitively for a moment and then said, with an amused air:

"Does the idea of discretion embarrass you, Madge? or did you blush intentionally to create the impression that you know more than we do?"

Madge retorted that extreme discretion forbade her to answer questions.

"Quite right, Madge," said the Doctor, "but if you ever have an opportunity to say to the giver how this good deed is appreciated, please mention that in my judgment twice the money differently applied would not have been of equal service to the college, and say also that the way in which the gift is made adds greatly to its value."

Margaret smiled, but said nothing, and shortly after the Doctor carried Marshall off to his study. Cigars lighted, Marshall entered at once into the matter of his obligations to his sister. He explained that his father's business since the panic of 1893 had been unproductive owing to lack of demand and to severe competition; that Mr. Marshall had employed all his available resources to put the works into condition to manufacture more cheaply, with the expectation of a good return in better times. He made it clear that there was no way to pay Emily's legacy immediately except to mortgage or sell the works. He confessed that he would prefer to sell, if he consulted only his own tastes. There were difficulties, however. It would be hard to find a purchaser, and he could not but feel that to sell at a price very much below his father's estimate of the value of the property would be—knowing his father's habits of mind—in a sense disloyal. If he were free to choose, there were other pursuits he would prefer to manufacturing, yet he had been trained for such work and had already spent nearly two years in it, and, as it would certainly be very difficult for a while to make the business go, he could not help feeling reluctant to dodge the first hard situation in which he found himself.

"I entirely agree with you," interposed the Doctor. "If a man is to accomplish anything worth the doing, difficulties must be met sooner or later, and, unless you feel that it is clearly beyond your powers to conduct the business, I think you ought to stick to it. You will always find compensations in doing good



work, even if it is not of the kind that most appeals to you.

"Under your father's directions, Emily's trustees have no choice but to demand the legacy within a reasonable time. If you decide not to sell, and the estate will not yield the money in any other way, I suppose you must mortgage. I am very sorry that the matter stands as it does, especially as the terms of the will would probably have been different if it had been made recently instead of five years ago. With your training, character, and abilities, it seems to me that under the circumstances it is plainly your duty to carry on the business. If you agree with me, I can only say: Don't shrink from it; believe that you can do what seems to be cut out for you; go at it, and good luck be with you."

After further talk about details, Marshall, leaving the Doctor to his evening's work, spent a few minutes with Mrs. Lawrence and the girls and then went home to the empty house, more dreary now than ever. He found on the hall table a note from Churchill:

DEAR THE:

I have heard in rather a queer roundabout way,—in fact, through Mrs. Netherby, although I had rather you would not mention her name,—that Michael Le Mark has a considerable sum in his hands for which he is seeking an investment. I have not much confidence in my information, and you know my prejudices about Le Mark; nevertheless, I give you this "pointer" for what it is worth in connection with the matter you spoke to me about the last time we met at the club. I do not like Le Mark, but he represents money, and I suppose his cash may be as useful as other people's. Pardon me if I am meddling.

Yours,

R. C.

The next day Mary Ellerton had a note from Margaret Lawrence:

MY DEAR MISS ELLERTON:

May I say to you that ever since we first met I have wanted to know you better than is easily managed at chance meetings or by exchanging calls. I want my father and mother to know you, so I venture to ask you to lunch here on Friday with only the family and my friend, Miss Marshall, who is staying with us. You know how she lost her father recently, but you may not know that she has no near relatives except her brother, who is much away from home. She has come to us for a little visit.

Sincerely yours,

MARGARET LAWRENCE.

When, after her first year of mourning, Miss Ellerton had begun to go about a little among her aunt's friends, one of the few people to whom she felt attracted was Margaret Lawrence. They had met occasionally and exchanged a few calls. Left alone one afternoon in Mrs. Thane's drawing-room, Mary, who had heard a good deal of the Lawrences from Churchill, led the conversation to the college, and Margaret, devoted as she was to her father and to all his interests, had talked about its affairs, about her father's opinions and plans, with so much good sense and evident knowledge, that Mary became genuinely interested. Margaret had dwelt particularly upon the needs of the library, a matter at that time very much upon the Doctor's mind, so it was not unnatural that she should have thought it barely possible that Miss Ellerton might have had something to do with the gift of twenty-five thousand dollars. She knew nothing about her friend's ability

to give such a sum, or even about Mrs. Thane's. The idea of connecting Miss Ellerton with the matter had come to her, and it remained in spite of any questioning about probabilities.

Mary read Margaret's note almost with consternation. She shrank from the part of benefactor as much as from the idea that any one should suppose it possible for her to give away a large sum of money. She had yielded to a desire that had been steadily growing upon her—a longing to do something; and now she was afraid that she had not taken sufficient precautions and would come to be talked about. She had her father's aversion to appearing as one of the rich, of whom many things are expected simply because of their wealth. She hesitated about accepting Margaret's invitation, but feeling that there was some excitement in meeting the situation, if she was suspected, she wrote an acceptance at once.

## Chapter IV

### A GREAT MAN AT WORK

*"Il y a anguille sous roche."*

IN 1892 there had been negotiations looking to the sale of the Marshall Iron and Steel Works to a corporation. John Marshall was to have received so much money and a fifth of the stock of the new company. It was also stipulated that he should manage the works for three years, receiving as compensation a percentage upon the receipts for merchandise sold, or \$12,000 a year, at the option of the directors. The International Investment Company was to have undertaken the execution of this plan, underwriting four-fifths of the stock.

Michael Le Mark, who was a director of the Investment Company, had acted on its behalf in the negotiations, which extended into the following year and finally fell through altogether. John Marshall had collected the papers touching this business and put them away in a box. He was not a man to talk of unfruitful plans, and his son Theodore, who had no connection with the works until two years later, knew nothing about the matter. But Le Mark had not forgotten it, having reasons of his own for a continued interest in the Marshall property, which,

among other advantages, had a valuable water frontage contiguous to the terminal yards and the wharves of the M. & L. E. R. R. Co.

Mr. Michael Le Mark, attorney at law, No. 407 Seneca Building, State Street, Morchester, was an astute man, a man with so many irons in the fire that he had little time for the practice of a profession he might otherwise have adorned.

Theodore Marshall was some time in making up his mind to act on Churchill's suggestion, but when two weeks had passed in which he had gone here and there with his proposal to borrow the money he needed, to be met always by the opinion that it would be impossible to arrange for such a loan at that time, he went to Le Mark's office, and after twenty minutes spent in an ante-room, was admitted, and finally received, with a chill and questioning air, at the end of two minutes more, occupied by the great man in signing letters.

Le Mark was tall, large-boned, square-shouldered, square-headed, with a square jaw, a dark skin, and iron-grey mutton-chop whiskers closely cropped. As he waited, Marshall felt that it would be a pleasure to have a round with this man, without gloves; to pound him thoroughly and knock him into a reclining chair that happened to stand in a corner of the room. There may have been something of this desire in his eye as Le Mark, laying down his pen, wheeled around without rising, to hear what his visitor had to say.

Marshall said: "You are Mr. Le Mark, I believe. I sent you my card. I have been informed that you are an occasional lender of money."

Le Mark's face darkened. He knew Marshall; they had met two or three times at considerable intervals although never to exchange a dozen words. It was not to be conceived that Marshall did not know him. He had meant to reduce his client to timidity or at least to embarrassment; he saw at once that he had mistaken his man; at the same time he resented the form and tone of Marshall's remark.

He picked up a card from his desk and glanced at it. "Like most investors, Mr. Marshall, I lend money in certain ways. Will you be good enough to state your motive in calling?"

"I wish to negotiate a mortgage for \$400,000 on the Marshall Iron and Steel Works."

"My dear sir, a manufacturing property must be a very valuable one to be adequate security for such a sum in times like these."

"The property is a very valuable one; it is worth about a million and a quarter."

"And you would sell it for, say, half of that?"

"By no means; would you, if it was yours, and you knew it to be worth double the half price?"

Le Mark frowned. "That depends. I am afraid, Mr. Marshall, we are not likely to get together upon the value of the property. How much would you sell it for if a purchaser were found?"

"I will not sell it; it is not a time to sell, and I mean to operate the works myself."

"Am I to understand that the property is at present unencumbered?"

"It is entirely unencumbered and in excellent

order; nearly \$300,000 have been spent in the last four years in additions and improvements, so that the plant is thoroughly modern in equipment and equal in efficiency to any in the country doing a similar business."

"And the business is paying handsomely," Le Mark said carelessly, as though putting a finishing touch to the description.

"No," Marshall replied promptly; "I cannot say that the business has lately shown profits; very few such industries have."

"Well, Mr. Marshall, you know your own business best, but it seems to me that you propose to burden your property very heavily and at considerable risk. You understand, of course, that it is impossible to negotiate a mortgage now that is not payable in gold. If you will permit me to say so, I hardly think you will find any one ready to make the loan even for gold bonds. I do not think it an investment for trust funds, and personally I have not the sum you name at my disposal."

Marshall rose. "Then it is not necessary to trouble you any further."

Le Mark looked at him coldly and said: "I doubt if any one can be found to consider your proposition, but am I to understand, in case I should learn of a lender, that you will execute a gold mortgage at five per cent. and pay a broker's commission of three per cent. on the face of the bonds; also the costs of drawing the mortgage?"

"Yes. Good-morning."

"Good-morning."

Marshall was hardly out of the door when Le Mark took from a drawer a bundle of folded papers fastened with an elastic band. He was on the point of pulling out one of the documents when he put it back. "No, that is the Ellerton will." He found another marked: "Copy. Will. John Marshall." He turned over the leaves. "I thought I was right. The bequest to the daughter is \$300,000; there must be debts or some pinch for money." He touched a button; a clerk appeared from another room.

"Please step around to the M. & L. E. offices. My compliments to Mr. Garrison and ask him if he will lunch with me to-day at the 'Clinton'. Let him set his own time, and, by the way, just stop at Dunker's and ask him to call here as soon as convenient. Tell Miss Rand to bring her note-book."

The clerk went out and the stenographer came with her book and pencil.

TO JOHN T. GRANT, First National Bank:

DEAR MR. GRANT:

I have an option in connection with the transaction of which I spoke to you recently. I should like to know at your earliest convenience whether, in case the matter can be arranged to your satisfaction, you and the gentlemen you mentioned as possibly willing to acquire an interest, are prepared to take care of one half, if I can arrange for the rest.

Very truly yours.

"Please mark the letter and envelope 'personal.' That is all now. Send Mr. Dunker in as soon as he comes."

A few moments later Mr. Dunker appeared.

"Good-morning, Dunker. I got your letter, and



I should like to hear details about your New York friend's call at Lawton & Haven's. What is the man's name—Long?"

"Good-morning, Mr. Le Mark; yes, his name is Long; he is a careful man too. When he went there, neither of the partners was in. He said he wanted to see about a matter in connection with the Ellerton estate; he was turned over to a book-keeper in a private office who listened to him, took his address, and said he would refer the inquiry to Mr. Lawton. That was all. Long could not get anything out of the book-keeper."

"Was there an office given up entirely to the Ellerton estate?" Le Mark asked.

"Yes, it seemed to be; the name was on the door."

"Was it much of a place? Were there any other clerks?"

"No one but a boy in a little ante-room. The office was a small one, but it had a large safe in the wall, and there was a lot of papers and books."

"Long made only one visit?"

"Yes, he got the letter from Lawton saying the property was not for sale. I sent you a copy."

"True; the letter did not seem to leave an opening. I suppose you have not said anything to Long about me?"

"No, sir. Neither to him nor to any one else in connection with this affair. I take it for granted that you have your own reasons for wanting the land; I make no guesses."

"I should like to buy at a moderate price," Le Mark explained, "because I think any well situated

real estate west of the built-up part of Morchester is likely to increase in value, but as there is no doubt about taxes and interest, I shall not feel badly treated if I have to let the matter drop. I am sorry you are not going to make a commission. You agree with me that it will be prudent to keep quiet about this whole business? I think you had better not speak of the property to any one. If some one else wants to know to whom it belongs, let them look it up as we did."

"You may be sure I shall not say anything about it. Good-morning."

"Good-morning."

It may be as well to say here that Le Mark's attention was first attracted to Miss Ellerton by discovering that she was the owner of a piece of land that he coveted, in view of certain plans for the opening of new streets. He had been checked in trying to get possession of it, and, reasoning that only a very well-to-do person would refuse even to entertain a proposal for its purchase, he had come to the conclusion that Miss Ellerton was a young lady to be looked after.

The "Clinton" was a down-town lunch club. At half-past one, Le Mark and Elihu Garrison, the president of the M. & L. E. Railroad Company, met there by appointment. Without circumlocution Le Mark broached the subject that had brought them together.

"Some years ago your road wished very much to acquire the Marshall property lying next to your yards. Do you still want it?"

Garrison answered somewhat indifferently: "We have no immediate need for it, and we can always get along without it unless there is a decided improvement in business. I judge it may be easier to get it now than it was when we talked of it before. Young Marshall appears to be hard up; he has been everywhere trying to borrow."

"Exactly," returned Le Mark. "The question is: How much will your road pay me for the property? Marshall has been in my office this morning."

"And you have an option?"

"I have an option."

Garrison was quite unmoved. He said: "We don't want the place now. You buy it, and after you have run the works for a few years you will be glad to let us have it cheap."

Le Mark smiled. "How much will you agree to give me for it in two years?"

"It might be worth a half million."

"You would have been happy to get it for double that five years ago."

"Five years ago is not to-day."

"Would you consider entering into an agreement to pay \$750,000 at the end of two years if I agree to deliver at that time?"

"Our board of directors would have to pass upon that. Possibly we should prefer to take your option off your hands and pay you for your trouble."

"Possibly," Le Mark replied; "but I am able to say that you cannot buy the property now. I wish you would get an expression of opinion from your board. I am not at present willing to make an

offer, but I am ready to negotiate when you know what you can do. I shall have a plan to propose that ought to meet with your entire approval."

The two gentlemen parted with mutual expressions of esteem.

## Chapter V

### MISS ELLERTON WALKS IN THE PARK AND BEGINS TO TAKE NOTICE OF MORCHESTER

A link in a chain has a larger experience than a ring in a wall.

ONE perfect day when the leaf buds of the oaks were opening and the other trees were already green, Mrs. Thane and Miss Ellerton, driving home from a lunch in the country, met Churchill at the edge of Morchester's park, which lies for some distance along the water. After a moment's chat, as he leant over the door of their landau, the top of which had been lowered, Churchill proposed that they should walk the rest of the way, loitering through the park to take in more fully the foretaste of coming summer in the clear sky and the warm still air. Mrs. Thane asked to be excused, but urged Mary to seize the opportunity to be out for an hour or two longer. Her conscience clear as to deserting her aunt, Mary was quite willing to fall in with the arrangement.

Any one with a discriminating eye, seeing this young lady step from the carriage, must have felt that Churchill had sufficient cause for his evident satisfaction. It should be mentioned incidentally, perhaps, but not as unimportant, that she was

extremely well dressed. She was tall, her figure finely moulded; her clear eyes and the quality of her complexion indicated undeniable health; this impression was heightened by a firmness of outline, an air of vitality and of elasticity that was most effective in contrast with a somewhat careful manner and motions that were rather deliberate. Churchill was a man of thirty or more; he looked intelligent and like a gentleman. They walked across a freshly cut lawn to higher ground a hundred yards or so from the drive and sat down upon a bench, in front of a clump of lilacs just coming into bloom. It was still early in the afternoon, and so warm that the temptation to walk was not great. It was easier to sit there watching the passers-by and looking out over the water.

Mary said: "I lunched with your friends, the Lawrences, the other day. I like Margaret very much."

"I am glad you do. I think you will find a great deal of pleasure in knowing her. There are few people I admire so much."

"I not only liked Margaret, but all of them. The Doctor is distinctly a gentleman."

"You think that most of the men you meet are only indistinctly gentlemen?"

"I do not like to say so of the men I meet; it might be said, however, of a larger part of the leading men in America than of the foremost men in most countries of Europe; at least it seems so to me. I am not thinking of the sterling qualities that make a worthy and efficient man, but of graces of mind,

manners, and morals, that combined produce more or less the effect of good art."

"Is it not enough that a man should answer to the definition—'one who has the habits and manners of good society'?"

"No, because good society has no absolute meaning, and I can not ignore either mind or morals."

"And Mrs. Lawrence," Churchill asked, "what have you to say of her?"

"That she is Mrs. Lawrence," Mary answered. "That is the charming thing about the family. All the members seem to be properly related and to belong to an harmonious whole, like a fortunate composition in colour."

"How about Emily Marshall?" Churchill ventured.

"She was very quiet; there is nothing to say of her, from what I have seen, except that she is pretty and well behaved, and not of the Lawrences."

"I sometimes think her brother would like to be," Churchill said reflectively; "but I cannot imagine Miss Margaret as adoring any one except her father. By the way, some unknown friend has given the college a good deal of money for the library. It is a secret that the gift was made; only the trustees and their wives, and the faculty and the faculty families, and a few other people have the keeping of it. I am one of the number, because I have been working a little in the library as a volunteer. Theodore Marshall was at the Lawrences when the letter came announcing the gift, and he tells me that Margaret appeared to know more about the benefaction than the Doctor. I dare say she had a hand in the

matter, and is getting more pleasure out of it than her father himself. Did she say anything to you about it?"

"No," Mary answered a little indifferently, "not especially to me; I think she mentioned it at table as a happy event, but went into no details."

Churchill reflected a moment: "Is not that rather odd?" he said. "If I remember, you told me that Margaret had talked to you for an hour one afternoon about the college and the needs of the library."

"Yes," said Mary, "she probably thought she had exhausted the subject. Neither she nor the Doctor talked of the college. Do you not think it very nice of them to have Miss Marshall there? What is the poor little thing to do? Keep house for her brother?"

Churchill seemed to shake himself loose from an idea and answered: "I suppose so, at least for the present. It is a pity she and Theodore are not more alike, that their interests do not coincide instead of being directly opposed. Have you met Theodore Marshall?"

"No, but I occasionally see him pass the house, if I am up early. I am not likely to forget his face after the way in which I first saw it."

"I should think not. I wish you did know him. Have I ever told you how we came to be such friends?"

"No. Will you tell me?"

"I should admire to, if I may speak as of Boston. I have known Marshall for many years, but never well until he came back to Morchester to go into business with his father. Although we were both



at college at the same time he was two classes below me.

"There is a down-town club called the 'Clinton,' used mostly by lawyers and men of business. I was lunching there with a friend one day and Marshall was alone at a table across the room. Near him at a round table in a bay window was a group of men, sitting over their coffee, all of whom belong to a particular set of bandits. I am so unlucky as to be called a reformer, and these people regard me as an objectionable person. When I went out they began talking about me, and presently one of them made a flagrant statement, difficult to prove or disprove, that happened to be false and damaging to my reputation.

"They were all older men than Marshall, and persons it was impolitic for him to offend. He walked over to the party, beckoning to two young men whom he knew, and when they were all together, he said:

"'I know Mr. Churchill, we are both graduates of the same college. I have heard you make a charge, sir,' indicating the man he was talking to, 'in a public place, of a kind you have no right to make about any man unless you can prove it.' He repeated what had been said. 'Now kindly tell these gentlemen to whom you spoke that when you said you knew your slander to be true you were mistaken, or tell these men with me that you still know it to be true. I do not think, myself, that Mr. Churchill is that kind of a man.'

"There was a good deal of a row. Naturally the liar refused either to stand by his lie or to retract it.

There was cursing at Theodore's interference and much unpleasantness. Finally Marshall forced a surly retraction. When the story came to me, as such things do sooner or later, I looked up Marshall and our friendship began."

Mary eyed her companion for a moment as if estimating probabilities, then asked, "Would it be indiscreet to inquire if the story has a sequel you have not told?"

"You mean what did I do? Marshall arranged that part of the affair also. He lunched at the club every day until my defamer came again,—I was not a member,—then he telephoned to me and I joined him. While he ordered my luncheon I went over and asked our blackguard, in the hearing of some of his friends, if he cared to say to my face what he had said about me when I was absent. He answered that he had already admitted that he had not sufficient evidence to prove his case in court. There were a few more words and the incident ended. Theodore had made one not very useful friend and half a dozen enemies."

Miss Ellerton asked no more questions at the moment; she merely observed that Mr. Marshall did not seem to be a timid person, and proposed that they should walk. As they strolled slowly over the turf, avoiding the roadways and paths, she said after a brief silence:

"I don't wonder you like him. Of the Morchester men who know this story, would not most of them think well of Mr. Marshall for acting as he did?"

"Yes; they would say that he was quite right

theoretically, but they would feel less like backing his success in this community than if he had held his tongue."

Mary looked puzzled. "I find it hard to understand."

Churchill hesitated. "I should think you would," he said, "and I find it difficult to explain. There is a set of men here who play into each other's hands—they are playing for money, of course; the losers are the public, and the city as a corporate entity. Sometimes they prey upon one and sometimes upon the other; strangely enough, the interests of the two do not seem to be always identical. They strike now at the city, now at the public, and, incidentally, they often do one or the other a good turn. This is bewildering and prevents clear thinking about what is going on. Meanwhile they have it all their own way, and grow fat and authoritative in finance and politics.

"They are clever and powerful. They are able to open or close the door of opportunity, and it is no light matter to get into their bad books. They grow accustomed to deference from the lean and eager and from the sleek and greedy. The standards of these men, who are so undeniably successful, constantly become more and more the standards of the community. It is to do violence to common sense to make yourself obnoxious to them. The man who tells the king he is immoral is a fanatic; he is not a 'practical' man, and in our day nothing more damning can be said."

"These men must be interesting," Mary suggested, "although they may be immoral."

"They are," Churchill assented. "There is a largeness in the way they play the game that strikes the imagination. They are too big to be fought with paper bullets fired from pop-guns charged with virtuous indignation, and that is about the only way in which they are ever attacked."

"What do you do when you play reformer?" asked Mary.

"I shoot off pop-guns too; to save my life I can't help it, now and then, although I know how futile it is to do so and how ridiculous it is to expect results."

"You think that these masterful men are to continue to have their own way?"

"Not necessarily," Churchill answered. "They may pile their fortunes so high that they will topple; they may take to quarrelling, and in the excitement of the *mêlée* stumble into some pit of their own digging; or the time may come when we shall have men equally strong, but with different ambitions, men who play as good or a better game, but not for money."

Mary looked a little concerned as she said: "I wish I knew more of some one place, of Morchester, since I am here. I have met a good many persons first and last, but there is no one set of people in the world that would miss me if I should disappear forever."

Churchill glanced up at her. "I doubt if you will ever coalesce with Morchester. I think of you as standing at a convenient distance, a little above us, and seeing more than we do who are in the shouldering crowd."

"But it is not kind of you to say so. Why should

I not be of you, if I am to live here. I do not like enacting the part of a separate molecule, without cohesion or affinities. At all events I shall not stand aloof from the society of Morchester, whether above or below. I am tired of walking or riding for hours every day to keep from moping. Do you realise that I have exhausted the possibilities of every horse in the riding school? If you would like to oblige me, please find me a horse that is not altogether *blasé*—one that has trod turf."

"My dear Miss Ellerton, may I point out a slight inconsistency in your remarks? You say that you wish to assimilate with Morchester and in the same breath ask for a horse. Just at present you could do nothing to put yourself so decidedly in a position above and removed from the rest of us as to ride a horse. If you really wish to get close to Morchester you must take to a bicycle."

Mary laughed. "Do you really mean it? I am so sorry. You see, I have no brothers or sisters or bicycle-riding relatives in any degree. I can not ride alone, and I hesitate to be the first to mount a groom on a 'wheel.'"

"That need not trouble you; there will be no lack of people ready to ride with you."

"You are good to say so; possibly later I shall ask you to select a bicycle for me, but I think I prefer not to enter society on a 'wheel.'"

"Do you really want me to look out for a horse?" Churchill asked. "What do you want and how much are you willing to pay?"

"I want a fine-coated bright bay with black points,

good shoulders, a short barrel, and legs well under, five years old, and fifteen hands. As my father used to say, I want a horse worth keeping, and I will pay what is necessary within reasonable limits."

"And how about disposition?"

"He should have the temper one would wish in a husband: a temper to be respected but trusted."

Churchill was amused. "You seem to know exactly what you want," he said lightly. "I shall put you in the way of seeing what is to be had, but I fancy you will do the choosing yourself. It strikes me as not unlikely that you know more about horses than I do."

"Oh, no. I have ridden a great deal with my father and read about horses, but I am only a woman."

Churchill laughed outright. "'Only a woman' has lost its value as a phrase; it is only an affectation nowadays."

They had now come down upon the foot-walk, parallel with the main drive, near one of the principal entrances to the park from the town side. They caught sight of Mrs. Netherby wreathed in significant smiles as she waved a hand to them from her carriage.

"She has been very civil to me lately," Mary observed, with no great show of gratitude. "She has called, twice, I think, and had me to lunch."

Churchill asked if she had enjoyed the luncheon.

"Yes, very much," Mary asserted, as though bound to say it. "There were eight or ten very pleasant women there. They were most kind to me; very intimate with each other; and beautifully dressed."

"What did you talk about?" Churchill inquired.

Mary slowly opened her eyes a little wider than common and surveyed him.

"Is not that a rather extraordinary question? Is a man ever supposed to know what women talk about at a luncheon? I will tell you this much in strictest confidence: I don't in the least remember. It was very good talk, but upon topics of which I was totally ignorant. I had a sickening sense of loneliness, and made an inward resolve to know more of Morchester if I died for it."

Churchill laughed. At the same time he indicated a public carriage containing four men in shining high hats.

"Do you see the man on the front seat, the one without a cigar? He is a friend of Mrs. Netherby's, —a rising man in politics,—the Hon. Felix McLean. I think he must be entertaining visiting statesmen; he seems to be pointing out the objects of interest."

"Is that Mr. McLean?" Mary seemed really interested. "He was one of the topics at the luncheon; at least I remember hearing his name. He is a man in society, is he not, as well as a politician?"

"Quite so," said Churchill. "He is of one of Morchester's noblest families, born to everything our world can offer. You see how handsome he is. Besides these advantages, he is a graduate of Columbia; has written a book; is a State senator, and a leader of the people."

"Dear me!"

"Yes, and more than all that, he is a clever talker and much admired by ladies. According to my narrow views, he is politically a bad man, but my views

are not worth a button in Morchester. He is distinctly a success, and that is all that can be asked of any one."

"I should like to know him." This little remark, dropped demurely by Mary, made Churchill look at her somewhat sharply.

"Nothing easier," he said. "Keep up your acquaintance with Mrs. Netherby and you will surely know him."

As they neared Mrs. Thane's door, Churchill asked if he might come in, and if Miss Ellerton would play for him. Mary denied both requests.

"I think I shall take a book for a little while before dinner, possibly a nap. You will have to wait for your music. I am very much obliged. I have really learned a great deal this afternoon, thanks to you. I begin to feel that I am getting a hold upon Morchester."



## Chapter VI

### THE MORTGAGE, THE MARSHALLS, AND MISS THOMAS

Pride, independence, and integrity are expensive personal luxuries.

IT was twenty-five minutes past three in the afternoon. Michael Le Mark and the Hon. Felix McLean were alone in the directors' room of the First National Bank of Morchester. They sat near a corner of a long, black-walnut table, covered on top with red baize. Le Mark had a block of paper sheets and a pencil.

"It is perfectly simple," he said, at the same time jotting memoranda; "Marshall wants \$400,000. Let us say we have a syndicate of five—\$80,000 a piece. You have not the ready money, but you have a third interest in the Whiting building, worth, say, \$130,000; your interest \$43,000, about. I can lend you from some funds in my hands \$25,000—on the security of your share. You margin your \$80,000 worth of bonds by \$20,000, and one of the banks will let you have the money. You will have \$5000 in free cash, and you will be paying interest on \$85,000 at four per cent., while you will receive interest on \$80,000 at five per cent.

"The M. & L. E. directors have passed a resolution empowering Garrison to purchase the property at \$750,000, if he can do so within the next two years. I do not know this from Garrison, but I know it; the resolution is on the minutes of the board. If Marshall is able to pay his interest we have a good five-per-cent. investment, and the bonds will be salable. If he cannot pay, we foreclose and get our money back—principal and interest in any case. If at foreclosure sale we acquire the property for less than \$750,000, we make the difference between the purchase price and that sum."

"Yes," interposed McLean, "but suppose the M. & L. E. bids at the sale? The road can buy the place in open market and leave us out."

Le Mark explained. "Why should it? We can bid to the amount the company has voted to pay; it would make nothing by that. Garrison now thinks I have a purchaser's option. After our syndicate is made up, excepting the fifth man, we shall show Garrison that in no case can his road get the property for less than the amount at which his directors have valued it. We ask him to join us and offer him a fifth interest; he can take it and be in a position to know what is going on, so that he can guard the interests of his road, or he can let some other man come in with us. If he stays out, we can squeeze the road, if we get a chance; we have not agreed to make a delivery. If he comes in, we shall contract to let the road have the property for \$750,000, provided we get if for enough less to pay us for our trouble. It's all right, McLean; it is a business opportunity;

we can't lose, and the only thing to prevent our making a handsome turn is the chance that some one entirely outside will come in and bid three quarters of a million under foreclosure, which is extremely unlikely."

McLean meditated a moment. "I think it will work," he said, "unless Marshall can carry his mortgage."

Le Mark shrugged his shoulders and stared at the wall. "I wish he may; in that case we have simply made an investment; but what do you think yourself of the chances—bad times, close competition, heavy fixed charges, and little or no working capital?"

McLean nodded. "He is too damned particular for a business man anyway. I suppose he is doing the right thing by his sister; but he made an ass of himself at the 'Clinton' about that fellow Churchill."

"So I understand." Le Mark was going on, but the door opened and the president of the bank, Mr. John T. Grant, came in with Jacob Mather, president of the Morchester National Bank. There was a nerveless handshaking, a remark or two about the weather, and then the four gentlemen proceeded to their business.

The general plan was easily arranged. One more turn of the screw was to be applied to Marshall. The syndicate would take the bonds at ninety-five and possibly market a part of them at par through a dealer in securities. If foreclosure was threatened they could buy back at a discount any bonds that had been sold. Le Mark said nothing about his broker's commission of three per cent.; that was a

private plum. Such bonds as were not sold were to be held by the members, with an understanding as to helpfulness one to another. Due care was taken as to certain little niceties of arrangement and statement, so that no one need have concern about irregular business, or be troubled by questions of conscience raised by doubts as to complete protection. But the upshot of the whole matter was that Theodore Marshall was to get a loan, paying roundly for it; every one else connected with the transaction was to be secured against loss and to stand a chance to make a considerable gain.

The banks might profit by receiving as deposits larger shares of the cash balances of the railroad; the railroad was in a fair way to get possession at a reasonable price of a much needed piece of land. Mr. Garrison was to have an opportunity thrust upon him. Emily Marshall was to have her money. There was cruelty, doubtless, in the fact that Marshall had got to make his works pay immediately or lose every dollar of his inheritance, and it may be noted that it was to the interest of a number of important people that the works should not pay,—but there is commonly some cruelty in business.

To anticipate, it may be said here that in due time Mr. Garrison joined the syndicate; Marshall executed the mortgage; Le Mark paid over about \$365,000; and Emily's legacy was handed to her trustees. As for Theodore, as soon as an understanding had been reached, he was face to face with his future and the difficult task it held for him.

The elder Marshall had come to Morchester as a

lad, fresh from the country, with a solid physique, a good character, and a hard head. He had made his way by that combination of native intelligence, strong nerves, and tireless energy that is so well adapted for success in American life. He had married a young woman from his native town, better educated than himself, but less ambitious, who had in certain ways been more or less starved amid the concentrated interests of her husband, and failed, partly through her loyalty to him, partly on account of a native diffidence, to find outside of her own house the distractions that would have been most agreeable to her and most useful for her development.

Society meant nothing to Mr. Marshall, and his wife did not quite understand what it meant to the social leaders of Morchester. Genuine and straightforward in character, with uncompromising ideas of right and wrong, she disliked what was purely artificial, and she had too much self-respect to seek a recognition that could only be obtained by concessions to prejudices and habits for which she had scant sympathy.

The house in Grove Street was always a little dull and a little sad. There was no one note that belonged to it, to which the instincts of all its inmates responded. While Emily was still playing with her dolls, and Theodore a schoolboy, their mother had died of an acute illness. Mr. Marshall was for a time overwhelmed, not only by personal grief, and the sense of desolation that comes with such a loss to one who has not taken the trouble to make friends, but by the responsibility of having to take charge of the

children. After the first shock, with characteristic energy he went about finding some one in whose hands Emily would be safe.

His inquiries brought to his attention a Miss Thomas, a New England woman who had been a teacher, lost her health, and regained it through the discipline that nowadays sometimes rescues a victim of overstrained nerves. Mr. Marshall was confident, after a single interview, that his daughter could have no safer companion. Miss Thomas accepted the charge and lived with the Marshalls until Theodore came from his studies to join his father, and Emily was old enough to take the reins of the household. She then went back to her old haunts in Massachusetts and to a life in which she felt more at home than she had ever been able to feel in Morchester, where her position was undefined and she had felt uncomfortably restricted. She was attached to Emily with the interest that comes from fidelity to a trust rather than because they were particularly congenial. After her father's death, Emily naturally turned again to Miss Thomas, who was then in Germany, but consented to return and live with Emily at least for a time.

It was about the first of June when the negotiations for the mortgage were completed and Marshall knew precisely how he stood. Emily was again at the Lawrences—this time for a week only; Miss Thomas was expected daily. Meanwhile Theodore slept and breakfasted in the Grove Street house, and took his other meals wherever it was convenient.

One evening, after dining rather late at his club, Marshall went home for an hour or two at his desk in the small room that his father had used as an office. He let himself in with a latchkey and went straight to his work. The office door was ajar and the room lighted. He found Miss Thomas in his chair under an argand burner. She rose to shake hands, and there was evidently mutual regard and sympathy in their greeting,—in fact, these two were more sympathetic and more attracted to each other than were Miss Thomas and Emily; to see her again gave Marshall a distinct pleasure, and he had a sense of relief, a sense of an occurrence really cheerful and promising, as he noted her familiar features and even the characteristic air of her clothes, which always had about them a hint of quaintness. Her age was not less than forty. She was rather tall, and erect, with almost the figure of a young woman. Her features were regular and handsome, her hair abundant but grey; she had the pallor as well as the marks, indistinct but undeniable, of one who has had small-pox. She was one to whom others instinctively turned in trouble, because of the impression of self-command and strength invariably made by her quiet eyes and the measured tones of her voice.

"How do you do," she said, as she took Theodore's hand. "You did not expect me quite so soon?"

"Miss Thomas!" exclaimed Marshall. "I am uncommonly glad to see you. How well you look. We knew your steamer was due, but Emily thought you would surely go home before you came here. She is staying with the Lawrences; she expected to come

in day after to-morrow, I believe. How long have you been here?"

"Only since six o'clock. I sent a telegram from New York, and found it on the hall table. Jason thought it was for you—Mr. Marshall instead of Miss Marshall—and left it where you would see it on coming in. I sent a note to Emily telling her she would find me installed."

"She ought to have been here," Marshall said, almost with impatience; "at least she ought to be here now."

"No, I disagree," replied Miss Thomas. "She came at once and was here for an hour. I begged her to stay to-night at the Lawrences. Let her make the change comfortably to-morrow and not discompose them by a hurried departure. I am quite willing to have a chance to talk to you."

And they did talk—until very late. Marshall had always found it easier to speak freely to Miss Thomas than to any one else. It was a relief to go over with her the trials and perplexities of the last two or three months. She had known his father; she knew Emily, and she knew about the works.

After Miss Thomas was in possession of the facts, she grew so evidently graver that the young man asked her what she was thinking about.

"I was thinking about Mr. Le Mark," she answered. "I know that three or four years ago your father was very angry at something with which Mr. Le Mark was connected. He spoke once very bitterly about him, and I think there was some question then of a sale of the works."



Theodore said he knew nothing of it.

"How did you come to go to Le Mark?" Miss Thomas resumed.

"I had word from Churchill, who was prompted by Mrs. Netherby, that Le Mark had money to invest. I know very well that Le Mark has driven a hard bargain, and has pocketed a thumping commission which comes out of my pocket. I supposed that the profits on this deal were all that he was after, but it is possible that he has some scheme in his head that looks further.

"To speak plainly, Miss Thomas, I have had to make great sacrifices and to run extraordinary risks to execute my father's will according to its terms. I might have put off a settlement for some time,—perhaps until better times,—but I preferred to meet my obligation to Emily as soon as possible and to be free from responsibility in that direction. I have taken good advice and done the best I could; if I go down now, she is provided for at all events and I can take care of myself in some way. I don't mean to go down, though, if I can help it."

"But," said Miss Thomas, "might you not have got the money on better terms if you had waited? Is there not hope of better times after the presidential election?"

"Possibly," Theodore answered; "on the other hand, should the Populists have their way, no one knows what will happen. It seemed the right thing to get the money now if it could be found. At one time it looked impossible; now it is done. The terms are bad enough, but I have met my obli-

gations. The works are in good shape; besides the mortgage I do not owe as much as is owing to me, and there are considerable stocks on hand. I certainly have a fighting chance."

"And good luck to you," said Miss Thomas, as she rose. "I believe you will win, but not if you sit up all night as well as work all day. What time do you breakfast?"

"At half-past six."

"Worse and worse."

"Yes, it is neck or nothing now."

## Chapter VII

### MISS ELLERTON VISITS MR. NETHERBY'S FARM

Consider the difficulty of reconciling virtue with mastery in a wicked world, and pity the poor souls lost for the sake of "progress."

MRS. NETHERBY'S attentions to Mary Ellerton did not end with two calls and an invitation to lunch. These civilities were followed up by a pressing request that Miss Ellerton would spend a week at Box-Walk Farm.

I cannot leave town just yet [Mrs. Netherby wrote], that is, not for the summer, but I think it would be pleasant to get a breath of country air. "The Farm" is my husband's domain, and I am seldom allowed to intrude. I have, however, secured possession for ten days, and, although there is no room for a house-party, I shall ask two or three others—just enough to keep things going. Come and drink fresh milk and taste our country pleasures. Do come, I want you so much; it is hard to see enough of you in town.

Box-Walk Farm was seven miles from Morchester, accessible by rail and at a convenient distance for driving and for bicycles. Mrs. Netherby came to town one morning by an early train that she might be driven back by Delaney Plunkett, who had put his coach at her disposal. Besides Mary

Ellerton, Mrs. Netherby had secured Miss Constance Plunkett and Mr. and Mrs. Bob Griswold for a visit, and Felix McLean for the day. They all drove out together. It was a lively party, and as they rolled along through the rich country, freshly dressed in new foliage, Mary's sensations were an odd mixture of exhilaration, amusement, and curiosity, dashed with a suspicion that her presence in the company was in some way a little incongruous.

One might almost be pardoned for saying of Miss Plunkett that she was a "showy" girl. She was a little vociferous, and quite too knowing; she knew Morchester and New York; she knew Paris and London; she had ridden a bicycle in the Bois de Boulogne, and played golf at Cannes. She knew about the latest fads, the latest slang, the most recent novels, the newest music,—in fact, about most things that were both new and fashionable. She had a great deal to say, and she said it without the slightest diffidence. The Griswolds were nice people—very amiable and well behaved. As they had no particular opinions of their own, except that to be Griswolds was all that could be asked of them, they fell in pleasantly with any views advanced by their friends, and were generally liked. The Honourable Felix, Mary had seen at a distance; on a nearer view he did not seem to be alarmingly formidable notwithstanding his claims to distinction.

The seven miles were accomplished well inside an hour; with a fine swing from the turnpike into a well kept drive,—turf and a row of maples on each side,—the coach rolled up to the front door of the

"farm-house," and all hands dismounted for a general inspection of the premises before breakfast at one o'clock. They visited the stables, the barns, the silo, the dairy, the Jerseys, and the pigs, and at about noon they went back to the house. Mary was shown to her room; after examining it and putting herself to rights, she slipped down-stairs, meaning to have a quiet half hour on the veranda, where the view was delicious, before the others came to breakfast.

At the foot of the stairs there was an enclosed space, lit at the end by glass, and having a door on each side. She could not remember whether she had come in from the right or the left; in any case it probably made little difference. She opened a door on the right into a room strongly flavoured with tobacco smoke and unmistakably a man's inviolable retreat. There appeared to be no one there, and she stood for an instant enjoying that consciousness of superior ability with which a woman observes the results when a man has had his way with a room.

As she was on the point of shutting the door, a hand came from behind it and closed firmly about her wrist. She was drawn, not roughly, but irresistibly forward, and the door was pushed to rather sharply behind her. She stood confronting a man who appeared to fully share her astonishment. He was of spare habit, with blond hair and beard, eyes a little prominent and dull, and a face that showed chronic fatigue. There was rather too much variety in his clothes; they all looked as if the word "fancy" must have had a place in each item of his tailor's bills. He dropped her hand, and, adjusting his eye-glasses,

as he looked at her with head tipped back, said with considerable coolness:

"Very sorry, I assure you; beg pardon humbly; I was putting a book away behind the door; just saw your skirt through the crack and thought you were my wife, you know."

"You are Mr. Netherby?" Mary spoke with more composure than she felt. "I should beg your pardon; I was coming down-stairs and mistook the door; I am very sorry to have disturbed you."

"Not at all; wait a moment, please; let me tell you how it was. Entirely my own fault; I thought I had locked that door. Any one likely to mistake it except my wife. It was against agreement for her to come in here; I was to be let alone and meant to slip off this afternoon. Wish you would be so good as not to say anything about finding me; don't like this sort of thing, you know; like to be quiet with my books and farming. Hate all these people. I beg your pardon; you don't seem like most of them. Would you mind introducing yourself? I think I should like you."

Mary smiled. "I am Miss Ellerton; I have not been very long in Morchester or I might have known you before. I quite understand that you may prefer to live your own life; I have a liking for books myself."

"Have you? Well, see here; I will leave you the key to the book cases in the hall. How long are you going to be here?"

Mary said that Mrs. Netherby had been kind enough to ask her for a week. Mr. Netherby exclaimed:

"A week! You will need it, then. Whenever you can't stand it any longer, take a book and disappear; but you must promise not to let any one know. It is quite out of the question to allow other people at my books; I would n't have my wife rummaging among them for a thousand dollars."

"But, Mr. Netherby, there is no reason why you should give me the key; I am very much obliged to you; I think, though, it would be better that you should keep it. Perhaps sometime you will show me your books yourself."

"Why should n't you have the key? You need n't use it if you don't want to."

"You are very kind, but you see, it would not do for me to be disappearing from time to time, and, moreover, if you will pardon me for saying so, I do not think it would be quite fair to Mrs. Netherby to take it."

Mr. Netherby seemed struck by a new idea.

"Very nice of you to say so," he said; "ought to have thought of it myself. Wife and I have so long agreed to differ, I am afraid I don't consider her point of view. We are good friends, you know, but tastes are not the same. She has it all her own way except on the farm; the farm is mine; breach of contract for her to be here at all. Who are in the party this time?"

Mary ran over the names. Mr. Netherby shrugged his shoulders and looked as if the list could not be a worse one.

"Do you find them amusing?" he asked.

"Certainly I do; why not?"

"Will not amuse you long." Mr. Netherby shook .

his head mournfully. "The Bob Griswolds are mere shells—blown eggs; do for exhibition purposes, but quite empty. Plunkett girl gets herself up in the taste of the Queen of Diamonds—regular playing-card; voice like a guinea-hen. McLean—sort of camelia, grown in rottenness; suggests funeral of the body politic. Delaney Plunkett—family tastes; likes to show himself; would accept situation as a poster; no earthly use."

Mary's breath was quite taken away. Before she could find anything to say, her extraordinary discovery went on with his monologue:

"Think I am odd? Manners not so good as the Bob G's? Look worse than a playing-card, regular figures on a penny valentine; what am I good for? True enough, can't help it, though; honest according to my lights; keep out of the public eye; run the farm and make it pay, or pretty near it. Want to get away? Of course you do; I don't wonder. Can I do anything, let me know; should like to be of use to you; good-bye."

Mary held out her hand. "Good-bye, Mr. Netherby; I hope you will show me your books sometime, if you can forgive me for being one of this objectionable party; and if I need advice, may I come to you?"

Mr. Netherby bowed elaborately. "Great pleasure to have seen you; don't in the least belong to the rest of them. I can't be away long; must come back in two or three days; will let you know; come and see me; absolutely at your service." He listened at the door, opened it cautiously, and bowed her out with anxious haste.



Once in the large hall that ran through the house, Mary found herself in the arms of Mrs. Netherby, whose eyes were dancing with amusement.

"You poor dear! How did you manage to get in there? Was he very rude to you? As I was coming down-stairs I heard your voices and I stopped to listen, until I had to fly for fear of laughing out and complicating the situation. How did you get in and what did he say to you?"

"I took the wrong door and walked in," Mary answered. "Mr. Netherby was most kind and courteous; I think he is charming. You will not be so unkind as to talk about my mistake?"

"Not for the world, my dear; I have a great respect for my husband; I can assure you that he is not to be trifled with. It was an enormous concession to give us the house for a week; we must keep our secret as if our lives depended upon it; *c'est convenu, n'est-ce pas?* There they are; I hear them coming down-stairs, and we shall have something to eat."

The breakfast was excellent, with strawberries from the South; asparagus, cream, and fresh butter from the farm; and cherries from California; it was informal and almost domestic. Mrs. Netherby was too clever to give them a luncheon that might have been served by a caterer from Morchester, although, if Morchester contained that morning anything that would help in carrying out her plans, it was undoubtedly there. Nothing was said about Mr. Netherby, and Mary could not help wondering whether he was eating his luncheon from a tray in his disorderly den.

She was seated between Delaney Plunkett and

McLean, who sat opposite the Queen of Diamonds and seemed considerably interested in her. They opened fire at once across the table.

Miss Plunkett began; with, "What are you going to do this afternoon when I go off on my wheel?"

"I don't think you will go a great way," McLean answered calmly. "You know there is no one out here to see you."

Miss Plunkett bridled and appealed to Griswold, who was a remote cousin: "Will you ride with me, Bob? No. I tell you what we will do; let's teach the honourable senator to ride; we'll have a bicycle school. Do you ride, Miss Ellerton? We will give you a lesson; I'll lend you a skirt. When the honourable senator is not tumbling off himself he can run alongside holding you on." Miss Plunkett screamed with delight.

McLean was still calm. "Miss Ellerton," he said, formally, "may I have the pleasure of taking you for a walk this afternoon?"

Mary said she would be most happy, and Miss Plunkett screamed again. "Mrs. Netherby, don't permit it; it's not proper. Miss Ellerton does n't know his character; he is a corrupting influence; I saw it in a newspaper only two or three days ago."

Here Delaney Plunkett interposed. "Come off, Conny" (his sister's baptismal name was Constance); "McLean has n't any character, so it is n't worth while bothering about it. But I back Conny, Mrs. Netherby, about Miss Ellerton; we don't want her carried off by any one."

"Let's all play pool," Griswold suggested.

Mrs. Bob G. was waiting to see what was the wish of the majority, so as enthusiastically to fall in with it. There were some other proposals, and amid the clamour McLean murmured to Mary, "You see what it is to serve one's country,—newspaper abuse, no character among one's friends." Then, raising his voice, he spoke to the table:

"I appeal to Mrs. Netherby not to permit any more unparliamentary language. With the exception of you, Miss Ellerton, there is no one at the table who has not come to me to get something; they all want me to work for them, bad as they make me out."

The company had suddenly become silent; everyone was listening. McLean went on:

"I shall not speak of Mrs. Netherby's interests; she is hostess, and she has not joined in the assault on my reputation. Of course, it was a pleasure to oblige Mrs. Griswold in working for an appropriation for her idiots' home, and to use my influence to have the trolley tracks run round the square instead of in front of the Plunkett mansion. Mr. Griswold may recollect that in the case of a certain institution there was some neglect about fire-escapes that put the directors in a rather uncomfortable position; and I seem to remember a request from my brilliant friend Delaney to block a public improvement that he thought inimical to his private interests. You all want some one to represent you among the political people, and because your representative sometimes succeeds in getting you what you want you jump to the conclusion that he is a bad man. And now I

want to go a little further—to ask for a bill of particulars. Will any one be so good as to specify an instance of immorality in my public life?”

There was no response until Mary suggested: “In obliging Mr. Plunkett, perhaps.”

“If Mr. Plunkett *was* obliged in the instance named,” McLean rejoined. “It has not yet appeared that he was. Miss Ellerton is a comparative stranger in Morchester, and I have found it necessary to make sure that the pleasantries of my friends are not misunderstood. I beg pardon for this personal explanation. ‘On with the dance; let joy be unconfined.’”

“Hooray!” cried Plunkett, waving his napkin; “three cheers for the senator!”

Mr. and Mrs. Bob G. waved their napkins. Miss Plunkett did not join in the demonstration, but leaned across to McLean and said acidly:

“Is not this what you call a vindication? Accept my congratulations.”

Before McLean could answer, Mrs. Netherby swiftly launched another topic and kept the conversation in control until the end of the meal. They talked a great deal of people and incidents, very little about anything fundamental or upon subjects of general interest. McLean was ready and easy, and appeared to advantage compared with the others. Mary was conscious of something in the man that was slightly sinister, but on the whole she found him decidedly agreeable. The entire party kept together on the veranda for some time after luncheon; then Plunkett and Griswold went off to the billiard-room; Mrs. Griswold and Miss Constance disappeared to dress

for bicycling; and Mrs. Netherby, pleading need of a nap, left Mary and McLean to themselves, with an admonition to take care of each other for a half hour and to keep out of mischief if they could.

They did not go to walk, but kept their chairs. They were comfortable as they were; and the outlook over the gently sloping valley was charming.

"I wish you would tell me, Mr. McLean, about the boulevards and the art museum. Mrs. Netherby seems very much interested in a loan exhibition to come off next winter, that has something to do with establishing the museum, but I do not fully understand its connection with the boulevards. I am most anxious to be an intelligent citizen."

"Do you know Mr. Le Mark?" McLean asked.

"No. I have not met him. I am only beginning to go out in Morchester."

"You may be sure," McLean said slowly, "that he will not long escape your attention or you his attentions. He is a very prominent man and he neglects no quantity that may affect his computations."

"Will you kindly explain how I am a quantity?"

"You cannot very well be ignorant, Miss Ellerton, that you are one of the least ordinary people in the world. You convey an impression of distinction, of intellectual poise and power, which will certainly make you an important personage in any society you may choose to enter."

Mary had a way when moved of slowly opening her eyes that was a trifle disconcerting to the person upon whom they were turned. It was difficult to tell what this motion foreboded; McLean took it to

mean affront at the liberty he had taken in making so personal a remark, but he met her eyes without flinching. There was a momentary pause; then she answered deliberately:

"If you mean what you say, your statement ought to give me pleasure and to put us upon a better footing. If it was only an experiment in gallantry, it was not in good taste. I am glad of an opportunity to talk with you, because I want to know more of men of action. I sometimes wonder if, when judged by the standards of those who are observers only, they get fair treatment. I should like to know more about Mr. Le Mark—I have heard of him, of course,—and I shall be infinitely obliged if you will talk to me without affectation."

"There is no man I know," McLean said, with a careful choice of words, "who enjoys among his friends a higher reputation for usefulness than Michael Le Mark——"

"What do his enemies say of him?" Mary interrupted.

McLean was almost disconcerted; he hesitated perceptibly before answering: "They say he is a hypocrite and a rascal, if they say anything. As a rule, they are wise enough to hold their tongues."

Mary was silent; she seemed to be intent upon the hills along the horizon. McLean looked at her closely.

"Miss Ellerton," he said, "you ask me to talk without affectation. I will, at the risk of establishing a reputation a great many good people are prompt to give me. I do not think unselfishness is a possible

rule of life. At all events it is not the rule that obtains and it never has been. Every one has desires and tries to gratify them. The desires of some are intellectual and sensual; if such people have the means of indulging their inclinations, they can live to a great extent apart from the rest of the world. If the things desired are money, control, authority, the power to shape results contrary to the will of others, it is necessary to live in the world and to understand the forces that govern it—the conditions that exist. It is not a question of what ought to be, but of what is. Take the world as you find it; you have a definite purpose; how can you attain it most surely, most speedily? The time is short, and failures are mortgages not readily cancelled. Beware the law, avoid a bad reputation as an impediment. If you enjoy the virtues of the moralists, indulge yourself in them as far as is safe without hazarding the main issue. Be vigilant, courageous, and never lose an opportunity. This is not a creed, but a summary of the practical rules of the successful man of action. Le Mark is eminently a man of action, and generally his plans appear to include benefits to the public. He wants Morchester to have a great art museum. I will not say that in this he has no selfish object, but I believe that at present there would be no prospect of a museum if there were no Le Mark; he is a type of the men that have made the country what it is."

Mary's eyes were again on the horizon. She recalled Mr. Netherby's summary of her companion—"a sort of camelia, grown in rottenness; suggesting the funeral of the body politic." She wondered

where Mr. Netherby had seen camelias at funerals. McLean was watching her and growing a little impatient at her silence. She turned to him with more appearance of interest than criticism, and asked why the good people he spoke of were so ready to impugn his character.

He looked at her reproachfully. "Is this quite fair, Miss Ellerton? You appealed to me to talk frankly. Are you not rather disingenuous in putting that question as if you approved, on the whole, of my point of view? The probabilities are that you cannot quite understand why the good allow me my liberty."

"No, it was not fair, but I am very much interested, and I was paying you the compliment of temporarily adopting your point of view. I was looking more to the end than to the means; I wanted to hear more."

"Thank you," said McLean, "I am entirely willing to go on. You ask me why I am not in favour with the good; because those whom we call by that name persist in announcing a set of standards—insisting that all the rest of the world shall conform to them in practice—that I do not formally accept. If I accepted their principles, nonconformity in action would not trouble them in my case any more than in their own. I am as willing as any professed reformer that every one should be virtuous, but they will have it that in trying to arrive at practical ends one should act as if all men were virtuous. So decidedly is this not the case that it is the easiest thing imaginable to catch the reformer, as soon as he



attempts to act instead of to preach, in the sins he denounces. The facts of human nature are too much for him, and as a consequence he is constantly stumbling into a false position because of his professions."

"There is enough truth in your last statements," Mary admitted, "to slightly strengthen your general position, which is, as you know, bad enough. I shall not undertake to attack it, because I refuse to be drawn into a debate for which I am not prepared. Rather I am going to join those who go to you for favours. Can you get me a plan showing the location of the museum and of the boulevards and their relation to other streets and places? Mrs. Netherby has enlisted me as an aid—and here she is."

McLean had only time to say that he thought he could manage it,—he was evidently a little puzzled by the request,—when Mrs. Netherby was upon them.

"Now, what have you two been doing? You do not seem to have walked far. I have been trying to bring the powers to an agreement; Conny and Mrs. Bob G. and Bob himself are going on bicycles, and Delaney, if it meets with your approval, is to drive the rest of us in our open waggon. We shall have dinner at seven to give the bachelors time to get home. Mr. McLean and Delaney can make up their differences on the way."

"Mr. McLean will get a good deal of driving for one day," Mary suggested.

"It will do him good, my dear; I have no doubt that since luncheon he has had an interval of being led."

McLean responded immediately to this. "You

have hit the nail on the head, Mrs. Netherby. Miss Ellerton has a way of keeping her own counsel and leading other people to tell all they know."

"Yes," said Mrs. Netherby, "I have discovered that she is a very deep person. But now, unless there is some unfathomable reason against it, I must insist that she puts on her hat."

## Chapter VIII

### A TURBULENT DINNER AT BOX-WALK FARM

There is little sweet reasonableness in the converse of a parrot and a monkey.

THE afternoon drive on that first day at the farm was uneventful, and the dinner that followed would not have been particularly interesting if it had not been so obvious that Miss Plunkett had a grievance against McLean, and as equally apparent that he was anxious to return to the footing of a former understanding. After dinner, Mrs. Netherby found an opportunity to whisper to Mary:

"Wicked woman, do you see how you have come between two gentle lovers? She really thinks she would like him, and he knows he would like her money. What a shame to disturb their happy relations!"

Mary had derived some amusement from Mr. Plunkett's attentions. He evidently admired her person and wished to engage her interest by displaying his conversational gifts. She listened, and responded with so much apparent conviction that he drove home with a better opinion of himself than a jealous world had ever before permitted him to enjoy.

The succeeding days of this country week were enlivened by visits from Morchester people, who drove or rode out to lunch or to dine, or simply for afternoon calls. Mrs. Thane, Mrs. Huddleston, and other ladies of mature age, weight, and respectability gave character to one luncheon; and the dinner of the fourth day was to be made memorable by the presence of Mr. Michael Le Mark.

That morning Mary received by post a formidable looking roll addressed in a handwriting unknown to her, but recognised by Miss Conny, who seemed annoyed. She said to Mary: "Is Felix McLean sending you his genealogical tree, or his portrait on a campaign poster?"

"Is it from Mr. McLean?" Mary answered; "does n't it look interesting? Perhaps it is a very long mint-stick done up in tissue paper. I must take it to my room; I could not bear the excitement of opening it in public."

"Upon my word," said Mrs. Netherby, who was sorting the mail while the others stood around her, "here is a letter for Miss Ellerton from my husband—if I know his handwriting; I cannot be sure, because he never writes letters to me. What shall we do with so dangerous a person? Shall we allow her to be at large?"

"Thank you," Mary replied, as she took the letter. "I suppose Mr. Netherby has heard that I was picking buttercups in his mowing yesterday and has written to give me notice of fines and penalties." She cut the envelope and read:

MY DEAR MISS ELLERTON:

I shall be back on Thursday. Will you come and see me about noon? Knock five times.

Your obedient humble servant,

JULIAN NETHERBY.

Mary handed this communication to Mrs. Julian, who chuckled and returned it with much affectation of mystery.

At a little after twelve Mary knocked and was admitted. She carried the roll from McLean, which was a map of that part of Morchester affected by the boulevards. Mr. Netherby begged her to sit down.

"Had that chair taken out and dusted especially for you; clean as paint; please sit down."

"You are very kind to me, Mr. Netherby, and I have taken you at your word. There is a matter I should like to ask you about, not from idle curiosity, nor simply because of its relation to the welfare of the public."

Mr. Netherby groaned. "Public welfare! The Gorilla is after you, I suppose. You don't understand? Gorilla is an African ape, much resembling man, remarkable for strength and ferocity; goes under the name of Le Mark in Morchester."

Mary only said, "Oh!"

"Sorry for you, awful sorry," Mr. Netherby continued. "Gorilla chews my wife regularly, but she is tough and used to it; can't help pitying youth and inexperience. What's his game?"

"He is projecting boulevards," Mary answered, "and an art museum. Mrs. Netherby is chairman of a committee. She has enrolled me as one of her

assistants, and I asked Mr. McLean to get me a map showing the new streets and the location of the museum; it came this morning. Will you look at it with me and tell me what you think about the boulevards—whether they will be an advantage to the property near by?"

"Have you property there? Don't hesitate to tell me, if you like; I'm perfectly safe; never betray confidences. May as well tell you, though; know all about your land; only good bit the Gorilla has n't nabbed. Looked the matter up myself: Ellerton estate, Lawton & Haven; went to see Lawton; nice man; known him before; asked if the property was yours; he said it was; told him enough said, you had better keep it. He said you meant to, and blew out about Le Mark. The Gorilla has been trying to buy it through a man named Long; and more than that—the beast got himself introduced to Lawton in New York the other day to pump him about your affairs; has got it into his head that you are a great heiress, and set a trap for Lawton to make him admit it. Let 's see the plan, if you like."

Again Mary said "Oh!" and went on to say: "Do you know Mr. Le Mark is coming here to dine this evening? It was he, was it, who wanted to buy my land?"

"None other," Mr. Netherby answered briskly. "Watch him to-night. He will come purring to you about public improvements. Amusing after we've gone over the map together; fitting to have made McLean send it; madden the Gorilla if he knew; let me show you."

And he did show her how Le Mark had planned the boulevards—to sweep' round from that high part of the town where the college was situated so as to join the park and bring into the market land that had long lain idle. He showed how much of this land Le Mark had originally owned; how much he had quietly bought; and how her farm, the rent of which now scarcely paid taxes, would be converted into valuable city lots. Finally he asked: "Which did you hear of first—the museum or that some one wanted to buy your acres?"

Mary admitted that she had refused to sell her land some time before she had been "approached" in reference to the museum.

"But don't you think, Mr. Netherby, that there is a public advantage in carrying out these plans no matter how much Mr. Le Mark may personally profit by them?"

"I think so," Mr. Netherby said slowly; "no doubt of it; improves the appearance of the city. The Gorilla stands to make a lot of money; so do you. There will be no end of jobs for the political people; great chances for McLean; personal pickings, or plums for political friends; just the sort of thing that solidifies a leader's power and keeps the party together. Public pays in the end, but that need not worry us; people of fortune don't pay the taxes; it is the poor devil, who has put his savings into a bit of land and a house, that pays. What more can any one want? Everybody happy; frugal devil pays the bill."

Mary meditated a few moments. "Life," she sighed, "is a much more complicated matter than I

supposed. I am afraid of all these pitfalls for the unwary. May I come to you, Mr. Netherby, when I need advice or assistance; there is really no one else in Morchester that I can turn to. It is true my income is greater than my actual needs, and I should like to do a little something helpful now and then in charity and education, but I am resolved not to be known as a giver. Three letters out of five that come to my aunt are appeals for money, and not a week passes that she does not have to listen to a personal account of some special need. With twice her resources she could not meet the demands that are made upon her. Will you help me to do what seems best, without getting my name into the beggars' books?"

"Right, right," Mr. Netherby ejaculated. "So very right. How came you to be so wise? I like you better than any one I have ever known. You may count upon me always—for anything; safe as the tomb; never tell secrets. I say: watch those chaps; they will get the road juries to award damages to the Gorilla and to assess you for betterments."

"They would hardly go as far as that, would they?" Mary asked incredulously.

"Would n't they?" was the answer. "They would haul your hills away in carts and dump them into Le Mark's hollows, if they thought they could do it without being brought to book. Keep a sharp lookout, but don't appear to mistrust them."

Mary let her eyes linger confidently upon Mr. Netherby's scarcely handsome countenance as she said: "How kind you are. What luck that I should



have stumbled in here and found so good a friend. Do you spend a great deal of your time here? What sort of books particularly interest you?"

They had hardly entered upon the new subject when a sharp tapping on the door summoned Mary to luncheon. That afternoon Mrs. Netherby was somewhat confidential and very funny about her husband. It was plain that, although he could barely be said to appear in the life she led before the world, he was nevertheless a force to be reckoned with whenever it came to taking an important step. If Mrs. Netherby had a long rope, it was equally certain that there was a watchful eye and a compelling force at the other end of it.

A half hour before dinner time Mrs. Netherby came to Mary in real distress.

"My dear, what shall I do? Russell Churchill has ridden out on a bicycle and means to stay to dinner. I asked him to come some time—in the most general way. Of course he turns up on the only formal occasion of the week. You know Le Mark is bringing out an Englishman, a Mr. Langford,—an entire stranger. Here is Russell in his bicycle clothes—the very sight of him enough to turn sour every morsel Le Mark swallows; and you never can tell what Russell will say. We shall all be uncomfortable, and it will be only good luck if we escape a riot."

Mary found it hard to take the matter seriously, still she wished to be sympathetic.

"I am so sorry, Mrs. Netherby. I don't see that anything can be done; you can hardly send Mr. Churchill off, can you? After all we shall have a

fourth man, which is something. You have so much tact; you certainly can keep every one in order."

Mrs. Netherby felt like swearing.

"This comes of giving general invitations," she said impatiently, "or of the stupidity of accepting them. Well, there is no help for it. Russell shall take in Mrs. Bob G. and have Conny on the other side. He will not have a happy time, as he came to see you. Mrs. G. can't talk, and Conny is safe not to say anything agreeable. Come down as soon as you can, darling, and be nice to Mr. Le Mark."

The Gorilla took Mary in; and he went to his dinner looking grim as a death's-head because Churchill and Langford, who had been thrown together for a few minutes on the veranda, had seemed to hit it off at once and were already talking like old acquaintances.

Langford was of a county council, or on a school board or something of that sort, and had been given letters to Le Mark as an important person in Morchester; but Le Mark's information about many things was not in the least of the kind that was of use to the Englishman. He found Churchill, on the other hand, able to tell him a good deal of what he wanted to know, and he grudged every moment that separated him from the man who could answer his questions. That a stranger, bringing letters to him, should turn eagerly to Churchill—uninvited and in a bicycle suit—was more than Le Mark could endure.

Mr. Langford, with that singular freedom from small restraints that is characteristic of the middle-class Englishman, to whom the pursuit of knowledge

or the good of the race is more important than mere social conventions, was bent upon getting at Churchill again, and was eating rapidly to be ready when the chance should come. Meanwhile he was rather unmindful of all Mrs. Netherby was pouring into his ear, and answered that lady a little at random.

"Yes, yes; really! Oh, that's very interesting! Does that often happen in this country?"

Mrs. Netherby spoke of one of her personal friends who had married an Englishman of title. Langford responded with an open pretence of attention.

"Yes, quite so; I don't know those people at all. Very good sort, I believe, but I do not know that set. Astonishing how many American girls marry Englishmen; is n't it, now?"

Mary was separated from this subject of England's Queen only by Mrs. Netherby and Mr. Le Mark. At the Englishman's last observation she looked significantly at her hostess. Langford, between two bites, caught the exchange of glances and spoke across to Mary.

"Does n't it seem so to you?" he said. "Odd, is n't it, that Englishmen should have to come here for wives?"

"Is it not odder that an American girl should go to England for a husband?" Mary asked.

Mr. Langford was seriously debating this question before framing an answer when Le Mark changed the subject by inquiring if there was any strong party in England in favour of bimetallism.

"I think not," Mr. Langford hastened to say; "I think not at all. There are a few men, who ought to

know better, taking it up as a political dodge, you know, but there is nothing in it. Extraordinary thing there are so many people going in for it this side of the water. I mean for free coinage at sixteen to one. We have few in England quite so mad as that. How do you account for this silver mania, Mr. Churchill?"

Le Mark paid no regard to the direction of Langford's question and undertook to answer it himself.

"It's simply a conspiracy, sir, between the silver-mine owners and the Western debtors. The producers of silver wish a market for their product, and the Western farmers and others who owe money to the East want a chance to pay their debts in depreciated currency."

"Ah, really! I did n't suppose it was so simple as that. Is that your view, Mr. Churchill?" said Langford, returning to the charge.

"No, I don't altogether agree with Mr. Le Mark. It is true there are a small number of people who have a direct and plainly selfish interest in the free coinage of silver, but as I believe free coinage would be directly opposed to the immediate as well as to the remote interests of the great mass of the people, even if it were plain that it meant relief for debtors, I think we have to look deeper for the support that the idea obtains. The real reason why free coinage is popular is because the people are sick of the corrupt league between money and politics that has been undermining our institutions ever since the Civil War. There has grown up a hatred of the so-called money-power; and because the money-power is opposed to

silver the people believe that free coinage will help them against the league."

Bob Griswold evidently felt that it was time for him to come to the defence of society. He turned to Churchill with the air of a man disappointed in a friend.

"What are you talking about the money-power for? Have you turned anarchist?"

"I should like to know more about this league you speak of," Langford announced from the upper end of the table.

"H'm. I daresay," snorted Le Mark. "The league exists only in Mr. Churchill's imagination, I fancy."

Churchill ignored Le Mark and spoke to Langford: "I do not mean that there is a formal association including politicians and certain representatives of moneyed interests. Such an open alliance would be less dangerous than the secret trafficking that now takes place. What I mean is this: any railroad company or other corporation, any class representing special interests, or even an individual, wanting political favours,—that is, special legislation or executive indulgence of some sort,—can go with considerable confidence to the politicians in expectation of getting what is desired, provided money has been paid into the party treasury and the understanding is clear that more money will be forthcoming, on demand, for so-called party uses. This is the conspiracy that threatens our political life, and it is what I mean by a league between politicians and the representatives of the money-power."

"Oh, really," said Langford, "very serious condition of things; is n't it?"

Mrs. Netherby was getting into a state of high nervous tension, and she made an effort to change the current of the conversation. But Le Mark was enraged and would not allow her to speak. He broke in at once.

"I am shocked that any one at this table should be guilty of attempting to give a foreigner false impressions of our country. I have lived in Morchester, Mr. Langford, all my life. I may say I have taken a somewhat active part in public affairs. I have travelled in other countries. I can assure you, sir, there is a higher average of intelligence, of public spirit, of probity in the United States than in any country on the face of the earth. Such assertions as this gentleman has favoured us with are the common talk of the idle, the discontented, the dangerous elements of the population. The prosperity and greatness of this country are sufficient in themselves to refute such charges. I would not be understood that there is absolute purity in our politics, or that all business is conducted according to the precepts of abstract morality. There is the taint of corruption everywhere. It is no more present here than in other countries."

Langford stared at Le Mark and then attacked his food again, saying nothing that was audible, although it might have been said that he muttered in his beard. Churchill was flushed, but holding himself well in hand. He said steadily:

"I can name twenty men in Morchester who went into politics poor. Since then they have had no regular business and have received no salaries, or only

such as were nominal, and they are now well-to-do if not rich. Does that sort of thing happen in England, Mr. Langford?"

"In England!" Langford repeated with surprise, "I am bound to say, and happy to say, it does not. We have our public servants in life positions—extremely well paid—an excellent set of men; and we have a few offices filled by election—members of Parliament, you know, men on the county councils and the school boards—not many in all. No one goes into politics to make money. The boot is on the other leg; it costs you a lot sometimes. Oh, now and then a man in business will try to get into Parliament, perhaps, to keep his name before the public,—a sort of advertisement, you know,—but no one goes into politics for a living."

Mrs. Netherby and Churchill started to speak simultaneously; both stopped; and then Churchill went on:

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Netherby; I was merely going to say that I can name twenty other men in Morchester who regularly contribute, and have contributed for years, from the treasuries of corporations of which they are officers, money for political purposes that has passed through the hands of the men of whom I have just spoken—those who live by politics. I should like to ask Mr. Le Mark how much money was raised in Morchester for the campaign fund of 1888—over \$150,000, I believe; and further, whether he has any personal knowledge of what became of that money. I do not care to wash our dirty linen before strangers, but Mr. Langford is,

I understand, a student of politics and economics, and it hardly seems worth while to try to conceal from him what every one who has read our own writers in those fields must certainly know."

"For heaven's sake, Churchill," Griswold interposed, "don't let us have any more of this stuff; it is n't decent."

"You see, Mr. Langford," chimed in Mrs. Netherby, "we ordinarily avoid talking politics in general society. It is rather delicate ground and we think it better to keep off it."

"So I have been told," Mr. Langford replied; "that's what makes the talk this evening so interesting."

"I am glad you have liked it, but we have had as much of it as I care for at one time. I want you to tell me about golf." So Mrs. Netherby put her foot down and hoped it would pass for tact.

Le Mark turned to Mary, almost too indignant to speak, yet determined to perform a duty. He had come with the express purpose of meeting her and he could not let the occasion go by without trying to impress her with his importance and with the value of his plans for the benefit of the city.

"We are very happy in having you come among us to live, Miss Ellerton. My dear friend, Mrs. Netherby, tells me you are going to help us about our loan collection. She has doubtless explained the importance of this undertaking, in view of our hope of founding an important art museum. To do this we need the co-operation of the municipality and of all public-spirited people. I shall take great pleasure



in going into the details of our plans on some more fitting occasion. I always give a portion of my time to carrying into effect some plan or plans for the intellectual or moral development of my native place. My family has always been identified with Morchester and I feel that my obligation to it is strong."

Mary was deeply interested, and Le Mark, having drawn Mrs. Netherby and Langford into the conversation, which he managed so as to afford him an opportunity of talking loudly of his services to his country, soon began to feel himself in his proper position. Churchill would have been left to silence and to sadness if Mary had not appealed to him from time to time, refusing to leave him out of account. Undeniably the dinner was dreary and every one was glad when it was over. Churchill went off early on his bicycle and Mr. Langford and Le Mark a little later by train. Mrs. Netherby and the Griswolds were distressed. Miss Plunkett went to bed full of malicious satisfaction. Churchill would surely pay for his indiscretion or she did not know her formidable relative; that relative—much feared but not beloved—had been baited when he least expected it; she found this fact pleasant to think of. Mary Ellerton laid her head on the pillow with the reflection that Morchester was really an interesting place. She also said to herself that Mr. Netherby was a "dear."

## Chapter IX

### THE MASTER OF THE MILL AND TWO WOMEN

Which cup, my master, will you drain—  
Sweet water or a choice champagne ?

A BRIEF spring had come suddenly to the estate of summer, discarding all at once the short frocks of girlhood and appearing in the stately apparel and full lines of maturity. Deep-bosomed luxuriance and warm languors pervaded the natural world, and turned the minds of all who could look forward to holidays to country places, to the forests, and to the sea.

By the second week in June, Mrs. Netherby had gone to Manchester, on the north shore of Massachusetts; the Griswolds to Newport; the Plunketts to Bar Harbour. The Lawrences could not get away until the end of the month, when they were going to their own nook on the coast of Cape Ann, not far from Gloucester. Emily Marshall and Miss Thomas were to be near them, taking rooms in a cottage within reach of an inn where they could get food.

Le Mark had already sent off with a governess four of the five motherless daughters that made up his family. Except Leonora, the eldest, they were awk-

ward children, deficient in good looks, and of little use to him for either pleasure or profit. As for himself, he remained at the post of duty.

McLean could not be spared from Morchester for political reasons. Churchill seemed for the time contented and refused to say what he would do later. Theodore Marshall with his mill on his hands had no thought of holidays.

Mrs. Thane hated the summer. She was always depressed by hot weather. She disliked equally to abandon the comforts of her town house or to take the trouble necessary to have a summer cottage of her own. In an effort to dodge her difficulties she generally stayed late in Morchester and then worried through the rest of the season paying visits, and staying here, there, or anywhere, as her evil genius prompted.

Mary Ellerton was tired of summers of this kind. The desire for activity, and for experience that would throw light upon aspects of life that perplexed her or awakened her curiosity, was strong upon her. She informed Mrs. Thane that she meant to stay in Morchester until the first of August; that she had taken a cottage near the Lawrences from that date until October 1st, hoping and expecting to give Mrs. Thane the comforts of a modest home for two months at least.

"I don't think I could stand it here through July," the elder lady observed, with some reproach in her voice; "and what do you want to stay for, if I may venture to ask?"

"Dear Aunt Sophie, I did not mean that you should

stay. You can make your visits and go about as usual through July, and we will settle down afterwards for a real rest."

"But you don't intend to be here alone?"

"Not at all. We shall shut the house up as usual, and I shall go for a month to the College Settlement. Leonora Le Mark spoke to me about it, and it interested me so much that I got her to arrange a visit for me. She is to be there for that month herself."

Mrs. Thane took this announcement with outward composure. She liked her niece and believed her clever enough to make few mistakes. But she had her misgivings about a July in the slums; she knew that *she* could not live through it, although possibly Mary might. The entire plan, taken for all in all, was one that suited her, so she acquiesced without making difficulties.

Churchill had not immediately found a horse for Miss Ellerton, and, as the plans for the summer months matured, she decided to postpone buying one until autumn. She would not be able to ride in July, and it was too troublesome to take a horse and groom to Cape Ann for the short time she was to be there. The idea of getting a horse abandoned, she changed her mind about a bicycle. She began at once to take lessons and in a few days had learned to balance and to mount, so that she needed only practice in the open in order to ride with confidence. Then Margaret Lawrence offered to ride with her in the quieter streets beyond the college grounds. This led to a genuine friendship, which grew up rapidly as soon as they were much together.

One Sunday the Marshalls and Miss Thomas dined with the Lawrences in the middle of the day. Coffee was served out-of-doors—the whole party gathered under a beautiful pin oak near the house, out of view from the street, and separated from the students' part of the grounds by a wide lawn that dipped into a swale and rose again to clumps of trees beyond. Emily was put in the hammock and the others occupied chairs or sat on rugs. Margaret poured the coffee at a wicker table.

"Why is it, Miss Thomas," the Doctor asked, "that we have become so restless? Two or three generations ago it would hardly have occurred to any one, having such a tree as this to sit under and grass like that to look at, that it was necessary to go somewhere else for three months with no particular purpose except to make a change."

"Are you sure of your facts, Dr. Lawrence? I am inclined to doubt whether our grandfathers were as contented as you suppose. I have heard of summer journeys in family coaches that meant much more trouble and expense than going from Washington to Bar Harbour by railroad and steamboat."

"You are probably right," said the Doctor. "Thank you for nailing a careless statement. I fancy we are a good deal like our grandparents in essentials. The wonder is rather that we have not changed more with the many and important changes in the conditions we live under. We are strangely tenacious of old instincts and habits. It has been pointed out by Sir Henry Maine, although possibly he quoted some one else, that with the Christian faith there came into the

world for the first time the notion of looking to the future instead of to the past for types of perfection, and yet, in spite of two thousand years of Christianity, we still have a tendency to credit our ancestors with virtue without looking too closely at the evidence."

At this moment Fanny climbed onto his knee and the Doctor received her with, "How do you do, little Fan?"

"Very well, I thank you," she answered, as if she felt an obligation to respond politely to any polite question.

"Can you tell us, Fan," her father asked, "why we leave our comfortable home and take a long journey to spend three months in a less comfortable house?"

"To have a good time," was the prompt reply.

The Doctor kissed her, and nodded to Miss Thomas.

"That is all there is to be said. We go away in summer because we like it. The change is refreshing and healthful. We find it pleasant and we go if we are able. In fact we most of us take a very large part of all the good things we can get, and those of us who have an ample share never question the justice of Providence in giving it. There are some hundreds of thousands of people in Morchester who do not have a summer holiday, people who think they are lucky if by working ten hours a day three hundred days in the year they can make three hundred half dollars, three hundred, five hundred, or ten hundred dollars, as the case may be. Marshall," the Doctor continued, as the conversation between

his wife and Theodore halted for a moment, "how many men do you have about the works?"

"Between four and five hundred."

"How many have a summer holiday?"

"I think vacations of ten days or a fortnight are given to fifteen or twenty men."

"They are the best paid men, are they not?"

"Yes, sir, the foreman and the upper clerks. A man who receives a yearly salary expects a holiday; men getting day wages do not."

"Why don't you give holidays to the men that have the harder work and the poorer pay instead of to those that have the best places?"

"For the same reason that Mrs. Lawrence, whom I regard as in all respects perfect, does not give vacations to her servants. It is not in the agreement."

"But my women," said Mrs. Lawrence, "have an afternoon and evening once a week."

"And my men—most of them, at least—have an entire day once a week," Theodore answered.

"Yes," interposed Margaret, "but you do not pay them for that day."

"No," Theodore admitted, "I do not. I pay them though, if they work on a Sunday, or overtime on week days. If you are entertaining and make your servants work unusual hours you do not pay them for overtime. It is all a matter of custom, understanding, or agreement. What seems just and proper in one case does not seem so in another. I suppose the most we can do is to avoid making people feel that they are treated unjustly. We cannot expect to arrive at absolute justice."

"I suppose it is not just for me to be here," Emily said from the hammock; "but so long as you all feel that it is just to give me the most comfortable place, of course it's all right."

Margaret told Emily that she was put where she was for æsthetic reasons. She was a suggestion of a Spanish fan. The Doctor returned to the mill.

"Tell me," he said, "do you have much difficulty in keeping the peace with your men?"

"Yes and No," Theodore replied cautiously. "I have been able so far to avoid pitched battles—strikes and lock-outs,—but, unfortunately, my business is not paying, and it can't be made to pay unless certain conditions quite out of my control are changed or I can manufacture more cheaply. There are various ways of lessening the cost of manufacture, but as wages are always a large part of the cost I am driven to trying to get more work done for the same money or the same work done for less money. The questions that come up are these: Can I show enough care in all details of management to make the men feel that I am faithfully doing my part? Have I won their confidence sufficiently to be believed when I say that I can not go on without reducing the cost in wages as well as at other points? It is of prime importance that what I wish to do should seem just to the men; whether it does or not depends a good deal upon how I try to do what I wish."

"In any case," said the Doctor, "you cannot pay less than standard wages?"

"No, if there is a definite standard—so much work, so much money; but if the standard is not



too precisely fixed a good manager can get more work done for a given daily wage than a poor one can."

"Are the men impressed by the argument that if you do not reduce wages you cannot go on?"

"Not very much; they are not so dull as to be unconscious that there is another aspect of the matter. They know that in case the manufacturer makes profits he is not eager, as a rule, to share them with the men. It is only when the men are on the whole pleased with the management and believe that it is unwise to enter into a controversy that they will accept less wages without a vigorous protest."

"Do the trades-unions trouble you?" Margaret asked.

"I have nothing to do with the trades-unions," Theodore answered, his voice hardening slightly. "Let me explain, Miss Margaret. I do not interfere with the personal liberty of the men. They may have any organisations they choose, if they attend to them outside of working hours and beyond my premises. On the other hand, I claim the right to deal with each man directly. I do not recognise the unions either to interfere with them or to negotiate with them."

"Is that an attitude," Dr. Lawrence inquired, "that you can be at all sure of maintaining?"

"No. It may become impossible at any time, but I am sure that it is my duty to hold it as long as I can. To be able or not to be able to maintain it is one of the surest tests of good management—of justice and moderation upon the part of the master. He is probably much to blame if a trades-union sen-

timent grows up among his men without suggestion from outside."

Miss Thomas asked if he felt like condemning trades-unions altogether.

"By no means," Theodore answered. "They are often the only recourse against great wrongs, and they have been the means of bringing about great good; but so have vigilance committees, yet we do not look forward with satisfaction to conditions that make vigilance committees necessary. I am even willing to say that I do not blame men for getting together in unions. Under certain circumstances I should blame them if they did not. I should always think a manager at fault if he recognised and treated with a union before he was compelled to, or made a union a necessary defence against his own oppression or trickery."

"If I were to speak as an intelligent trades-unionist," said the Doctor, "I suppose I should ask if the position you seem to think proper for the master is not that of a benevolent despot."

"And I should answer that benevolent authority acting within the law is better for society than a selfish oligarchy acting illegally. The master, in his relations with the unions, hardly ever contravenes the law. A trades-union rarely strikes without flagrantly breaking it. Usually the force of a strike is not so much in a concerted refusal to work as in a conspiracy to prevent others from working."

"You call a trades-union an oligarchy?"

"Yes. The government is certainly in the hands of a few. The benefits aimed at are for a larger

number, but still for a few—for a class, a guild, that refuses to let other men learn a trade, or to take work it has declined. The trades-union is more cruel to the men outside its membership than the benevolent despot is to any man. It is hard to imagine a peaceable society not governed by law. In my mind it counts for a great deal to be within the law. The trades-unions complain that the law is unjust. In this country the people make the laws by proxy. The vote of a mill-hand is worth the vote of a mill owner, and there are a hundred men to one master. If the unions think the laws unjust, let them elect legislators that will change them. They complain that the money-power is too strong for them. If they had brains and nerve to use their votes, the money-power would crumple up like a leaf in a flame. The union people act too much like slaves in revolt, not enough like free men who cherish their liberties. When they are honest enough to stick together and to send honest men to the legislatures they will be more than a match for the money-power."

"Whatever we ought to expect," said the Doctor, "of a democracy led by honest men, one cannot escape doubts about the future of a democracy in which honest men are led by rogues; and if this is not the case in trades-unions, it would not be difficult to find other examples. My dear, here are Miss Ellerton and Mr. Churchill coming from the house."

There was a general interchange of greetings, and Theodore Marshall was introduced to Miss Ellerton, who, Churchill explained, had promised to go to walk if Margaret and Emily would go also. Emily

declined flatly; she much preferred the hammock. Theodore expressed the hope that Margaret would leave his lazy sister to her idleness and that he might be allowed to make a fourth in the walking party. Margaret consented and they presently set out for the suburbs.

Mary Ellerton and Marshall had met at last—it must be confessed very much to her satisfaction. Everything she had known about Marshall had prepossessed her in his favour. She had seen him in danger—quick to act in a crisis; and under the shock of a sudden grief—simple and manly. She had seen him going to his work at an hour when the other men known to her were probably in bed. She knew that he had been prompt to meet obligations that seemed to touch his honour; that he was confronting difficulties in his business that threatened it dangerously, yet he had the quietly confident air of a man who trusted himself. Moreover, Churchill had talked about him enough to give her the feeling of knowing him while she was still unknown. She knew that he was doing something, producing; that he was hard at the world's vulgar but essential work—not juggling with counters or words; that he was a master whom people obeyed and upon whom many depended. She liked his compact, erect figure; his bearing; the firm mouth and steady eye. She liked Churchill, but with reservations; he did not quite win her admiration. Here was a man that might command it.

They walked together at first, and she was aware of a desire to be attractive that she had never felt

before. Something within her asserted a claim to his attention. She put in practice with unconscious instinct all those little subtleties of reserve, tentative confidence, appreciation, inconsequence—the thousand suggestions of an unrevealed personality—with which a clever and beautiful woman of high cultivation charms and bewilders a man she would please, leaving him, nevertheless, with the conviction that only long devotion will serve as a title to favour. Although the thought was not definite she was sensible that the occasion was critical. She was in a state of tension, like a Leyden jar, flashing at a touch.

The impressions received by Marshall were immediate and forcible. He recognised a new experience, in which there was excitement and interest. She was very unlike the women he had known. Never had he felt so much need of alertness and address. To talk with her was like playing a game of skill. It was impossible to be indifferent. In spite of himself he felt it important to appear well, and he was in momentary expectation of being bowled out and left in a foolish position. She had the knack of making people talk. That afternoon she talked herself as well, but so as to make him exhibit his character, his traits, his points of view, in a way that was to him almost irritating. She was fascinating—there was no doubt about that; she was doing what she chose with him, and he resented this a little because he believed that he was in love with Margaret.

Theodore Marshall walked back with Margaret. She was beautiful, as has been said, her type being

almost that of the *Pays Bas* in its most delicate examples—a purity and richness of colouring and a softness of outline that were peculiarly winning.

If Mary Ellerton could be said to have been a draught of champagne, Margaret was cool, sweet water—more grateful because in the life he led, which taxed his nerves but had not yet overstrained them; he needed refreshment more than stimulation.

Margaret was in fact the flower of a long civilisation, immaterial as well as material. She was descended through many generations from people in whom the energy of achievement had been united with a strong sense of moral responsibility. This union is a healthy one, and its best fruits are the best people the world has produced.

To Marshall Margaret represented everything that he most admired and most approved. They were congenial, and, given propinquity and no disturbing influences, they would have come together as naturally and completely as two globules of quicksilver.

As they walked home that summer afternoon, Theodore had a sense of peace. He felt that spiritual exaltation, vague, delicious, that comes before passion in the first love of a young man who is radically sound. Margaret seemed to him all that he could ever desire; more than he could ever deserve. He did not feel that she held him at a distance while attracting him in mysterious, disturbing ways, yet it seemed terribly uncertain, notwithstanding her frank acceptance of a mutually friendly relation, whether he could ever touch her in the sense in which he himself was moved.

Margaret asked if he did not find Miss Ellerton charming.

"Yes," he said, "I think you have hit upon the exact word. She is charming—an enchantress. She seems to me to represent the witcheries and the danger that have suggested a large part of the cynical things that have been said about women."

If he had accused Miss Ellerton of petty larceny, Margaret would hardly have been more astonished. She looked at Marshall in some bewilderment.

"I think you are unfair to her," she said, "and strangely mistaken. I have an entirely different impression. No one seems to me less to deserve such an opinion, to be more sensible and unaffected."

"I did not mean to be unfair," Theodore answered, "and I dare say I am mistaken. I spoke honestly, but probably without enough knowledge. I will try to have any opinion about Miss Ellerton that will please you."

Margaret did not immediately reply. She was not pleased at all at Marshall's estimate of her friend nor at his motive for being so ready to change it. After a little she said:

"Why should you change your opinions without a change of conviction? I do not like any one to have a false impression of Miss Ellerton, and I like it no better that you should speak as if your opinions were as readily changed as your gloves."

"Would it be any clearer, Miss Margaret, if I should say that judging Miss Ellerton accurately or otherwise is not to me a very important matter, while anything that concerns you is important? You have

been so good to Emily that I cannot help being grateful, and I should find life a little dreary at present if it were not for going to your house."

"I think you were very good to let us have Emily," Margaret returned, "and I am very glad if you like to come. My father is always gratified when any of his old favourites visit us. There is no one, you know, who stands higher with him than you do."

After a moment's pause she went on:

"It must be very hard for you—what with your personal grief, the difficulties in your business, and the fact that you can get so little leisure. Do you mind telling me how the business is going?"

He did not mind, and he told her briefly about his plans. He was making a strong effort to eliminate every element of uncertainty from his manufacturing; to have his mill in perfect order, and then make if possible large contracts that would permit him to work two shifts in twenty-four hours, insuring a greater production upon which to divide the constant expenses that went on whether he did much or little. He seemed to feel that he had nothing to complain of in regard to his business and much to hope for. There was a courage and cheerfulness in his way of speaking that struck her as admirable in view of the facts as she knew them.

Her father's interests were to her ideal as claiming a man's energies, yet for the very reason that they contained in themselves so many satisfactions she could not help admiring the fidelity shown by Marshall to the task that had fallen to him—one that she suspected him of taking up more from a sense of



duty than because he liked it. But her sympathy with him ended there. There was no such attraction for her in the affairs of the active, practical world as Mary Ellerton found in the idea of immediately effective work.

Although Margaret liked Marshall, her life was so full, she had dreamed so little, she was so little disposed to coquetry, that a strong interest in any man, coming into her life, would be slow of growth, and she certainly did not think of him as standing in any peculiar relation to herself. Love, when it should come to her, would enter unawares and be long in occupation before its rights would be recognised. Marshall had intuitively a fairly correct impression of her character and of her preferences. He knew that he must be patient, and he did not attempt in any way to make her understand his feeling for her. Yet there is something so subtle in the relations between finely organised men and women that where a strong devotion exists it makes itself sensible even if it is not recognised; and Margaret, as she said good-night, was conscious of a faint new fragrance in the atmosphere of that hour. She did not associate it especially with Marshall; she did not think of it; she simply felt the richness of possibility; suggestions of a world in which beauty should have its way, where the men should be clean and strong and women fair and good, where the air should be sweet and fresh, and rich greens lie massed against fathomless blue—suggestions of a harmony, appealing to every sense, that belongs to a day, to an hour, to the mood of a moment.

## Chapter X

### THE SEVENTH WARD

B

Curiosity § ii

Scrutiny § i

Sympathy § iii

Cash or commodities gr. i

SIG.—A teaspoonful once an hour—for the diseases of which the slums are symptomatic.

IN the early part of July, 1896, Morchester was pitilessly hot. Even robust men, with no hard work to do, felt at times a difficulty in getting breath. An oppression, stupefying to some temperaments and maddening to others, weighed upon the entire city and made its more wretched quarters near the water front reek like the hold of a ship in a tropic calm. The streets were indescribably dirty. Every kind of refuse except ashes seemed to accumulate more rapidly and to be more offensive than at other times. It was more offensive because of the need for cleanliness. But cleanliness in such weather is luxury. There was never any luxury in the Seventh Ward. In those torrid days and stifling nights its absence was cruelly evident. The people and their miseries were no longer hidden behind walls. As in a crisis the right of *habeas corpus* is suspended by a government,

the weather had suspended the right of privacy, and with it went the sense of decency. Women lost the pride of appearances; children went clothed with a rag; their moist skins caught the dirt in the air, dust or stains from everything they touched. Doors and windows were open, and late into the night the people lined the streets—on door steps, the curb, anywhere that was a little cooler than in the suffocating rooms. There were no longer any homes; the pavements swarmed with evicted tenants; the streets were like Castle Garden in its most evil days.

Between this sweltering, overcrowded area and the water were manufactories. Their walls and fences could not be passed. It was possible to get by only where the black streets ran down to filthy docks between piers guarded by watchmen. These piers were private property, or they were leased by the city and under private control. At night no one was allowed to cross the bulkhead line. From the middle of the ward to the water was a half-mile or less. A few hundred yards from the pier-heads in a boat, and it was quiet; there was no more dirt; on the water it was relatively cool. But the seventh-warders did not have boats; if they had owned them, there was no place to keep them; to hire one cost twenty-five cents an hour; that is, more than the *per diem* cost of food for most people in the ward—people who had to earn something day by day or go hungry. So the whole ward seethed in heat, filth, recklessness, and vice, and only thought of the cool water as a place to die in when it was necessary to die at once instead of awaiting an unsought end.

Near the centre of the ward was the College Settlement, almost as bright and clean as the electric street-cars; but it cost five cents—or more than half the price of a meal—to ride in a “trolley”; it cost nothing to visit the College Settlement unless you went too often; then you might be asked to join a club the dues of which were perhaps five cents a week.

There was something pathetic in the existence of this Settlement. Its position suggested an oasis, of the area of a circus tent, set in a desert and used for the relief of an army of ten thousand—a steady trickle of the water of sympathy, a cupful for each of a hundred or a drop apiece for all, but no subsistence. The family of the oasis may show what can be done with a well tended little garden, but they have no storehouses of grain and no herds for butcher’s meat. In the family there are trained observers, and they can tell later how the army suffered and what was overheard, or elicited in conversation, but they will not claim to have found a means of saving the ten thousand. The most they can do is to make wise suggestions, to advise—for instance, the husbanding of what water there is in the canteens; to say: “Do not drink it; suffer anything rather than drink it; when it is gone you will go mad; if you save it you will not go mad so soon, and there is one chance in a million that it may rain.”

Miss Ellerton’s residence at the Settlement brought with it none of the exaltation of self-sacrifice and none of the complacent credulity that makes the reformer confident of good results from his plans and activities. Her sympathies had been less cultivated

than her reason. She did not feel that much had been accomplished when she had cheered for the moment one poor soul. Such work was well worth doing, yet it was nothing in comparison with the need that was suggested by what she saw about her.

In actual contact with conditions known to her up to this time only through academic statement, she began to feel the weight of facts that, although they would have been readily admitted before, she had not until now understood in their real meaning. She was oppressed, almost stunned, by the mass of discomfort and evil that confronted her. She knew the meaning of her own fortunes by contrasting them with those of millions of human beings unsavable, or unconvertible to her standards, even by money in illimitable quantities.

As we all do at first, she looked for a ready means of averting the doom of the greater part of humanity to ignorance, evil, and suffering. Again, as most of us do who are quite sane, she recognised the futility of seeking for remedies of immediate and universal application. She saw that progress must be slow in the future as it has been in the past; that it must depend upon the energy of individual brains, used, with opportunity for favourable leverage, at this point or at that, to move onward, or, by putting a chock here or there, to hold up the great, unwieldy, crumbling, agglutinating ball of human affairs that with infinite slowness is urged up the slope of time. She saw immense difficulties in choosing a point at which to apply a lever with any assurance as to the result; and, worst of all, she saw that it would take

years of hard study, dealing with phenomena of the most illusive kind, before she would feel justified in deciding upon a course of action.

She saw too much, she felt too little; she might have said: "I did not make the world; I am not clear that I can mend it; I shall not try until I see my way to act without blundering." Meanwhile she would have liked to give actual relief in money or commodities to as many cases of distress as she could have attended to in her waking hours; but even if as a Settlement resident she was allowed to give at all, it was not in accordance with scientific benevolence recklessly to give people what they wanted. It was necessary first to establish the fact, if possible, that case so and so, deserving well of Providence, Providence had overlooked desert and according to human vision been unfair. Providence being convicted of scamped work, organised charity might patch up the job.

So Mary lived through those awful July days wondering whether she was performing a duty in making herself so uncomfortable, and unable to see her way to using judiciously her money to cure the ills of the world.

One evening at about half-past seven o'clock, as she was going through Siner Street, one of the best of the quarter, on an errand for "The House," she stopped for a moment opposite a narrow green door or gate, closing the entrance to a little alley scarce two feet wide and running under the second floor of a house to which it made a sort of back entrance.

She was looking critically, disapprovingly, at a

slushy stream of surface drainage that ran from under the gate across the pavement. In the moment's pause she heard behind the gate a sob of such genuine grief that she could not pass on without some inquiry. The gate stood slightly ajar. She opened it a little further and saw a decently dressed young girl of fourteen or thereabouts leaning face to the wall—her head buried in her folded arms.

While Mary stood there irresolute, another sob—this time almost noiseless—shook the girl so that it left her trembling. Mary stepped in and pulled the gate to. Then her arm went softly around the girl's waist and she said, "What is it, dear?"

The girl looked up slowly with wide, inquiring eyes, swollen with tears.

"Who are you?" she said.

"I am Miss Ellerton, of the College Settlement; that is, I am staying there a little while. If I can do anything to help you, I shall be very glad to."

The girl shook her head and hid her face again in her arms. Mary stood beside her—one arm still round the child—and stroked her hair, not knowing what to say. At last she whispered, "Tell me, dear, what is your trouble?"

"Father," the girl whispered in return.

"What about him?" Mary asked gently.

"He will die."

"Is he ill? Is he in the house here?"

The girl shook her head. "No, he has gone to work."

"What makes you think he will die if he is well enough to go to work?"

"He is n't well enough. It will kill him sure if he does n't stop working all day and going again at night."

"Why does he have to do that?"

"He does n't have to. I don't know why he does it. He thinks more of his boilers than he does of mother and of the rest of us."

"What makes you think he is very ill?"

"Why, you only have to look at him; and he has the most awful cough you ever heard; he don't eat nothing, neither; and he can't sleep, and he'll just die in his tracks."

"Does he work for himself or is he working for some one else?"

"He works for Marshall, down at the Marshall Steel Works on Water Street."

"Mr. Marshall does not expect him to work day and night, does he?"

"I don't know what he expects; but I don't think it's Marshall; I think it's father hisself; he's got crazy about them boilers."

"Would you like me to see Mr. Marshall about it? I know him, and I don't believe he wants your father to hurt himself."

"I dunno. Father 'll die if suthin is n't done. I suppose that Marshall is the only one that could keep him away."

"How far is it to the Steel Works?"

"It is n't far; only about five or six blocks."

"Would Mr. Marshall be there now? I suppose not."

"He might be; he 's most as bad as father; he works some every night."



"Would you like me to go with you to see Mr. Marshall, if he is there?"

"Come and see mother; I could n't go unless she says so."

They went out by the gate and in through the front door, and an entry carpeted with a strip of oil-cloth, to a parlour containing a marble-topped centre table of imitation mahogany, upon which were photograph albums on blue and white worsted mats. There were two or three rocking-chairs in the room, a sewing-machine, and a parlour organ—very much the furnishing of the sitting-rooms of the poor, but not very poor, the country over. The girl opened a door leading to a back room and said impulsively:

"Mother, here's a lady says she knows Marshall, and she's willing to go with me to the mill to see if we can't get father home. May n't we go?"

A troubled-looking woman came forward, evidently puzzled by the situation and her daughter's request. She looked at Mary with no great cordiality and waited for her to speak.

"I am Mary Ellerton; I wish you would tell me your name and your daughter's; then we can talk together more comfortably."

The girl spoke quickly, without waiting for the elder woman.

"Mother is Mrs. Nansen and my name is Christine."

"I heard Christine crying in the alley, Mrs. Nansen, as I was passing, and when I tried to comfort her I found that she was grieving because her father is working when he ought not to."

"That's so," the woman interjected in a dull way.

"Christine says he works for Mr. Marshall, whom I know. I do not think Mr. Marshall would allow your husband to work if he knew he was not fit. If you approve, I am ready to go to the mill to see what can be done about it, if any one will show me the way."

"Where did you say you came from, miss?"

"I am staying at the College Settlement."

"Well, you can take Christine if you like; that is, if you will promise to bring her home. I don't know what you can do, but if my man is not put to bed I sha'n't have no man soon, and I'm afraid it's late now for doctoring. I've got four young children, and I don't know what we are to live on if anything happens to Dick. He's the best husband in this city, and the best father, and the best man, but he can't last much longer the way he's going on. Marshall told Dick himself he thought as much of him as any man he ever seen. And Dick thinks there ain't no one in the world like Marshall, and that 's the reason he's wearing of hisself out in this way. It tain't right and I wish you'd stop it."

"We will see what we can do, Mrs. Nansen. Come, Christine; the sooner we go the better."

They passed out into the dusk and took their way through the better streets, as far as it was possible to choose, to Front Street, then down another street pitching sharply to Water Street—turned to the right and came to the gate of the works. It was high and made of pointed palings; on it was painted "No Admittance." To the right of the big gate was a small one, standing open, that let them into a pen

with a little widow at one side. A voice from an invisible man came through the window, which was not a foot square.

"Well, what do you want?"

Mary said: "Is Mr. Marshall here to-night? If he is, will you tell him Miss Ellerton would like to see him?"

A door beside the window opened and a man, who appeared to be no fool, said civilly: "If you will go round to the office door, marm, on Water Street, I will go through and let you in. Mr. Marshall is about—somewhere; he is probably in his private room."

Mary and Christine returned to the street; the wicket shut to behind them. Almost as soon as they found the office door it was opened and they passed through a dim entry into a room ill lit except where the light of a shaded lamp fell on an open desk. They had gone in quietly, and, following the cue of their guide, they waited in the shadow until the master of the mill looked up from his papers. He was on his feet in a moment.

"Miss Ellerton! I am very much surprised to see you here; I hope I can do something for you. Please take this chair."

He placed one for her and another for Christine. He knew they had not come merely for the pleasure of seeing him, and he was all attention to their business.

Mary began with a reference to her visitation at the Settlement, and then told how she came to hear of Christine's trouble, which she briefly outlined.

Theodore asked Christine a few questions as to how much her father was at the works at night, how much on Sundays, and so on.

"You see, Miss Ellerton," he said, turning to her, "Nansen is paid by the month, as foreman of the boiler house. He is not paid for overtime, so he might be at work any number of extra hours and the fact escape my attention. I have noticed lately that he was not looking well, but it is so uncommon for a man who is not paid for overtime, one who is at liberty to take some hours without deduction from his wages, to work on the whole too much, that I was not on the alert for such a case.

"Dick Nansen is one of the best men about the place, and I think it not unlikely that he has been overworking. Now, what shall we do? Have him up here on the charge of excessive zeal, or go to the boiler house, as though in visiting the works, and let our complaints follow naturally as the result of inspection? Christine came to show you the way. Is not that so, Christine? You came to show Miss Ellerton the way, that she might examine the works by night and report to the College Settlement. Is it the Social Science Department and the Bureau of Labour? Would your father mind your coming after him, Christine?"

The girl shook her head and followed, as Marshall and Mary passed out together into what seemed a vast black ruin lit here and there with dazzling fires. The noise was bewildering—clangorous, explosive, intermittent as to its intensity, but relentlessly persistent.

They had hardly stepped into the darkness when Mary was halted by Marshall's firm hand upon her arm. She was conscious that they stood with their backs to a pile of iron, while, within reach of her hand, two coal cars, which seemed gigantic in the gloom and in such close proximity, rolled jolting by. She was not very much frightened, but she felt vaguely that there was something titanic in their surroundings—among the jagged ends of piled iron and shunted coal cars.

They crossed the track behind the fire-mouthed switching engine and went into the rolling mill. She had seen a snake-charmer handle boa-constrictors, and it was a tame affair compared to the work of the catchers at the rolls and the straighteners. Here was a succession of quick-darting, writhing, fiery serpents, dashing at the men with a terrible celerity and vigour—each caught by the throat in the nick of time, as it threatened not to sting or squeeze, but to bore through a man in its way as a hat pin through a pat of butter. These extravagantly long, gloriously arching and bending animals, with their beautifully regular curves were tossed about with a nonchalance that was in its way splendid.

Men stood in what appeared to be a tangle of active snakes whose lightest touch would sear to the bone, and with incredible rapidity steered one after the other on a course of its own as if such work were a heroic sport in which they delighted. It came to Mary that anything in a game with a ball was dull and inept compared to all this dexterity—an error meaning, perhaps, a life.

They passed hammers that breathed like giants heaving at a load, that squashed an ingot at a blow, or tapped with the touch of a jeweler's tool. They looked in at the mouth of a furnace that held a bath of melted steel, blinding white, with a surface having the tints and texture of mother-of-pearl. They walked by engines that swung their crank shafts with the rhythm of fate, and others that sped like devils; and finally they went down into the pit of the boiler house.

The boilers were ranged upon one side; before them worked the firemen, stripped to the waist. Everything was black except at the spots where fire doors stood open, and at points, evenly spaced, where dim lights showed the gauges. The heat was suffocating; at first it seemed to Mary that no one could possibly live in such an atmosphere. Besides the heat, there were sulphurous gases, which choked, and stung the eyes. At one end of this gallery of Hell stood a little house like a sentry-box. In front of it, on a high stool, his eyes on the firing, sat Nansen. As he saw Marshall and women coming, he got down and saluted.

"Everything all right, Dick?" Marshall said easily.

"Steam's been a little low, but it's coming up now. Have to fire pretty hard with this coal, sir. It's not so good as it was; it seems full of slate."

"That's bad; but it's not so bad that you have to be on hand all night, is it? Is n't Swicke in?"

"Yes, sir, he's in; he's up making a joint on the feed-water heater."

"And what are you doing here?"

"I'm just watching the steam. There are two new hands on to-night. The men have been giving out bad this week; they don't seem to be able to stand it, especially at night."

"Well how do you expect to stand it, if you are here day and night?"

"I'm not here for all night. I just looked in."

"Do you look in every night?"

"Well, most every night since we've been running full."

"And you are here all day?"

"Why, naturally I am here in the daytime."

"How did you come by that cough, Dick?"

"I caught cold when we were making those repairs to the stack last February. Do you remember the Sunday when we fixed the damper frame? You know it was so hot in there that you could n't stand it but a little while. Then we would go up on the heater by the window to cool off; I suppose I cooled off too sudden."

"Well, look here; you are doing more than your share. I don't expect a foreman on the day turn, even if he is the general foreman of the house, to spend all his evenings at the mill. It's well enough to look in once in a way, but everything in moderation. You have n't been taking care of yourself, and now you'll have to lie off until we get you into better shape. Here's a lady from the College Settlement taking me to task for working a willing horse to death, and she has brought your daughter along to see you home. Now I tell you what I want you to do, Dick. Go home with your little girl, here, and

stay at home to-morrow. I will send a good doctor to look you over, and if he thinks it the right thing we will send you to the country for a few days. I'm not going to have you getting me a bad character by hanging around this fire-room after your hours are over. How many Sundays have you been in lately?"

"It's a long time, sir, since I've missed a Sunday. We don't get any other chance for repairs these days."

"Well, it 's a shame. Go home now and stay there, and take Christine with you."

Mary had been eyeing the man during this conversation. She was struck by his unaffected but evident devotion to his work; by the perfect understanding that seemed to exist between the two men,—an understanding that recognised a difference of position, but hardly a difference of obligation or interest,—and by the marks of exhaustion or illness in Nansen's face. Her reflection was that ability, and purpose to do a thing well, matter more than the kind of work, always provided the work is worth doing. She liked these men with definite objects and direct action, men who trusted each other and talked without circumlocution. These were the men who used to fight when fighting was in fashion.

Dick spoke kindly to "Crissy," and, with a simple, "Well, good-night," he took her hand and went up the iron stairs that led to the yard level.



## Chapter XI

### ON THE WATER AND CROSSING THE RIVER

There must be a place somewhere among the stars for simple souls that have made a religion of mere devotion to duty.

WHEN Mary Ellerton and Marshall found themselves alone in the boiler house—that is, when Nansen and Christine had gone and left them with no one to talk to except each other or the firemen,—they both became conscious that the situation was rather unusual. Mary's attitude towards Marshall seemed suddenly to change. She was at once more reserved, and at the same time she appeared immediately to claim all the little attentions due to a woman of the world from a man of her own set. They were no longer on the safe, if to her unfamiliar, ground of business; it became necessary for him to think of her as a lady thrown upon his hands at night in an uncivilised part of the town; and it was rather puzzling to him that as they talked she did not seem especially anxious to relieve him from any consequent embarrassments.

Her first words raised the whole question.

"Why did you send Christine off and leave me to get back alone? Was not that a little inconsiderate?"

"I beg your pardon," Marshall answered, quite taken aback. "I suppose I was thinking only of Dick, and my anxiety to second your care for him made me thoughtless about your own convenience. You don't mind my seeing you home, do you?"

"I have already robbed you of a useful man; if I take you away, what will become of the mill? You would scarcely be here at this time of night unless there was work to do. Can you not send some one with me as far as Rogers Street? I know my way from there and am not afraid when in sight of the lighted shops."

"I can send some one, of course, if you prefer, but it would be a great pleasure to go myself. I have nothing to do that could not be better done at another time."

Mary hesitated. At last she said: "I like your works. I should love to stay here for another hour or two if it were proper and not so very warm. Do you know how people suffer in the streets above? You have cut them off from the water and they are dying for the want of fresh air."

"Miss Ellerton, you have given me an idea; why not let me take you back by water? You must have suffered awfully from the heat; it is possible to get some freshness in a boat, and I can find one at the next pier. I will take you aboard from our own landing steps and row you out a little, making a detour so as to set you ashore at the foot of Rogers Street. I can leave the boat there and go with you as far towards the Settlement as you choose."

"Is not all this a little unconventional, Mr. Mar-

shall? As a Settlement resident I am not supposed to be squired by gentlemen, certainly not to have leisure for going upon the water for refreshment. I am living as of the Seventh Ward, and you have shut us off from the water."

"If you are of the Seventh Ward," Marshall retorted, you do not care a button about conventions; you are glad to get upon the water on any terms, and as a Settlement resident you are bound to take care of your health and to experiment with cheap and healthy pleasures."

They were in the yard again, and it seemed relatively cool. Mary looked up at the smoke overhead as if searching for a possible star.

"Your argument is weakened, Mr. Marshall, by the fact that, although I am of the Seventh Ward at present, I shall not be next winter. What would be the effect, do you think, of a statement that I sought you in your office in the evening, and then went out alone with you in a boat?"

Marshall was silent for a moment; presently he said with some decision, as if ending the matter:

"I beg you to excuse my blunders; I am not much of a lady's man. If you will kindly follow me, I will send the night watchman with you; he is entirely trustworthy."

Mary answered this speech with a cool deliberation that was almost as effective as the assurance with which she changed her mind—quite as if it would have been rude in Marshall to have expected anything else.

"Instead of sending him with me, why not send

him for the boat? I should rather you did n't leave me and I don't think I care very much what Morchester may say to your rowing me to Rogers Street. Do you suppose we can see the stars from the water?"

Marshall did not even attempt to reply. He called a man and told him to go for "Barney." For the next few minutes he scarcely spoke, while Mary entered upon a rather acute and impartial commentary upon the College Settlement. Barney received his orders and in due time executed them. His commentary as the boat passed out of hearing was: "Rum enough; what the devil next!" Meanwhile Mary, with a great show of a thoughtful but open mind, had enticed Marshall into a discussion of some of the so-called social questions. She did most of the talking, and he was glad to have her, because she seemed to him to put things cleverly, and he was wary of letting down his guard before this redoubtable young woman, who was not to be ignored and was so difficult to understand.

At last they were clear of the smoke and under visible golden stars, whose blurred images quivered upon the water. It was by contrast deliciously cool. Marshall stopped rowing and let the oars trail in to the side of the boat. Mary sat with her hands together and on her knees, her chin uptilted as she looked at the stars directly overhead. She seemed to have forgotten him—but only for a moment; she was not given to posing. With half a sigh she brought her eyes to his level and said quite simply:

"It would have been rather foolish to have missed this, would it not? I am very much obliged."

"You need not be burdened by obligation to me. I am so dull that I should have sent you home with Barney, if you had not saved yourself with uncommon presence of mind and decision."

"I ought, of course, to have gone with Barney, but I have seen so much of your Barneys lately I thought I should enjoy another sort. Are you and Barney friends?"

"Excellent friends."

"And I have no doubt you have a good deal in common, yet to me only the differences appear. I suppose that is because I have been familiar all my life with your type, the gentleman type, and have never been close to the Barneys until the last fortnight. I can distinguish between individuals of the first class; as yet the Barneys are all alike. Have you ever noticed that when you first see the people in a summer hotel there seems to be little to choose; they look very much the same, one and another, and not very interesting; but if you stay, they are gradually differentiated so that possibly you may find some that are charming, who seem to be there to save you from the others. You may imagine what it is after ten days of the Settlement to come upon a gentleman—captive to my bow and spear, for half an hour."

"I am glad to be useful," Marshall answered. "I am only sorry that your choice is so limited. The gentleman type is extremely rare about the water front at this time of night. It is fortunate that I can row and"—he paused—"that I know when to stop rowing."

"You knew the exact moment to stop," she ad-

mitted. "It is those little intuitions that make the gentleman such a valuable person, and you row very well. Do you swim?"

"Yes."

"Particularly well?"

"Rather well."

"Do you think of anything you do not do rather well?"

"Of forty things."

"May I mention one?"

"If you will be so good."

"You do not dissemble very well."

"I don't understand."

"No? I will explain. I took you by surprise in your office; I interrupted your work; I interfered with your management; I have carried you off in a boat and embarrassed you by arranging a *tête-à-tête* under the stars with a new woman or some sort of an objectionable person from the College Settlement, and you do not quite know what to make of it, yet being of that species so rare on the water front at night, you are trying to look as if you enjoyed it—no, that is going too far—you are trying to conceal that you are bored, and succeeding not particularly well. But console yourself with the thought that you have done two good deeds to-night. You have been generous—or, let us say, just—to Dick, and you have given a poor girl a great pleasure. You may row in now; you have given me my stars and the quiet; you may go back to your lamp and your hammers."

"I think I have had enough of the lamp and the

hammers for this turn," Marshall said rather gravely and with an audible sigh. "Suppose you give me a little more time to show my appreciation of to-night's luck. I may be but of a base mechanical sort and hardly quick enough with my foil for your fencing, but I am not quite insensible to peculiar favours from the gods. If you will put the cushion in the bottom of the boat, at the bow, and eke it out with my coat, so that you are tolerably comfortable, I will row you gently the whole night through. You may talk when you feel like it and sleep when you will. You shall be safe; you shall not be bored, and all night it will be still and cool and open."

"I thank you, Mr. Marshall. You even dissemble gracefully. Please row me in at once. It would really annoy me very much to be late in getting back."

There was something decisive in this request; it had to be obeyed.

"Very well," he said, and pulled the boat to the landing. As she stepped out Mary gave him her hand and thanked him with the matter-of-fact air of a woman of business who had received a timely lift as she was hurrying about her errands. She beckoned to a policeman, spoke a word to him, and, with a wave of the hand that was not matter of fact, disappeared with her new escort.

It was near the end of the month before Miss Ellerton and Marshall met again; then they found themselves alone in Mrs. Nansen's sitting-room. Dick had not been looked after in time; he came back from the country, after a few days, more ill than when he

stopped work. He went to bed, and there he had been for a week, losing strength day by day and suffering horribly.

Marshall had seen to it that he should have excellent medical attendance. Everything in the way of food, wine, luxuries,—anything suggested for his relief or comfort,—was supplied at once and without stint. Still, Dick continued to fail; the doctors did not seem to be quite clear about his malady, but it was plain to any one that he was broken; he had ceased to assimilate his food and it looked as if he must die.

Marshall visited him every day, and Miss Ellerton two or three times a week; they both called one Saturday afternoon. They arrived separately and were shown up-stairs to the sick-room; Mary had found Marshall there, and they had come down together; they were waiting for the doctor, who was expected at any moment. Both were impressed with what they had seen. Nansen was a strong and rugged man, a stoic by temperament, a man of few words. He was very grim in his suffering; it seemed as if he knew that he must die and had concentrated all his powers upon dying patiently and valiantly, but it was very horrible—this violent seizure by death of a man in his prime.

Mary sat by the window. Marshall stood by the mantle-piece, which had no kinship with a chimney. He spoke first.

"I do not feel that I could have helped it. The man was working too many hours, though not by compulsion, as you know. I was at the works some fourteen hours a day myself, but I was not on the



look-out for excess of devotion in others. In fact, I was at a loss to understand Nansen's behaviour until we had talked together, the day after your visit to the works. He was so competent and trustworthy that I had left in his hands almost entirely everything in connection with his department. He looked after getting in the coal and felt personally responsible for keeping up steam. I found that for a few weeks there had been constant trouble. The coal was supplied to us by the M. & L. E. R.R., coming over their line and from their own mines.

"Lately it has been poor in quality and there have been constant difficulties about getting it. Night after night Dick has been out along the line trying to find enough cars to keep us going, and he has hung around the boiler house, trying to make steam with slatey coal, when he should have been at home. All this was unforeseen by me, because we had been supplied by the railroad for years without much cause for complaint. Dick thought the difficulties were accidental and he preferred to get over them by himself. He knew that my hands were full."

"What do you mean by accidental?" Mary asked. "Have you a reason for thinking there was a purpose to annoy you?"

"Yes. It was suggested to me that the railroad people were trying to cripple us. I would not believe it at first. After Dick was laid up, and I began to see about the supply myself, it very soon became apparent that the railroad was hostile and was annoying us intentionally. There was trouble also about coal for the gas producers, and we could not get cars

for our shipments of merchandise. As I was dependent upon the railroad, all this was a serious menace."

"And what was the end of it?"

"We have not yet reached the end, but there are no more delays in getting coal."

"What did you do?"

"It is a little history. I first personally saw the subordinate officials who had to do with the matter, and then I wrote to Mr. Garrison, the president of the railroad company. I got no satisfaction from any one—nothing but shuffling and evasion. My next move was to buy five hundred tons of coal from the M. B. & P. people, whose terminals are on the water front two miles above us. I had it brought down by lighter and piled in the yard. Finally I wrote to cancel my standing order with the M. & L. E. This brought Mr. Garrison to a more conciliatory temper, but I am still using lighters."

Mary asked what object the railroad people had in crippling the works.

"Ah," Marshall answered, "that is what I should like to know. It looks as if they had an interest in injuring my business. One would suppose their interest would lie in fostering it."

Mary was reflecting, her chin in her hand, before going further into the subject, when Dr. Furnival quietly entered. He had made his visit up-stairs.

"I am very sorry," he said, "our friend is no better, and, to be frank, I think he is near the end; his stomach refuses to work and his heart is acting badly; at any moment it may cease to act at all; the man is almost insensible. I think his wife would like it if

you would both go up again and sit with her. She says she would not feel so lonely if you were there. Your being there will also tend to keep the neighbours away, which appears to be desirable. These people are Protestants; the neighbours are Catholics and they do not think a man should die without a priest."

Mary and Marshall went back to the stuffy little room—low-ceiled, and nearly half filled by the bed on which the sick man lay. Mrs. Nansen sat dully beside her husband, fanning him and wiping the sweat from his face. Christine lay in a huddled heap near the foot of the bed. The younger children would come in, speak to their mother in hoarse whispers, and go out. So hours passed, until the last quivering breath was drawn and Dick had taken his sense of duty somewhere else.

Such watching long continued, without food, in the heats of July, strains the nerves. Under long tension they play queer tricks. Fantastic thoughts enter the mind, and the will makes poor work at the mental helm. Marshall thought of Mary in a boat under the star-sprinkled night; he recalled the tones of her voice, the lines of her figure, her face—strong, intelligent, with its high-bred perfection, and the almost wistful look that now and then stole into it for a moment and faded before a severity that was scarcely less beautiful. He recalled the slow tide of actual feeling that came when he had offered to row her through the night. Then he would glance at her furtively, and catch himself up for thinking of her too much.

Mary thought for the hundredth time of the potentiality that lay in her money, and inwardly moaned that it had not prevented, could not have helped to forefend, this physical suffering and slow heart-breaking that made the dragging hours so terrible. Here was pain of body and bruising of spirit; but what had money to do with it? It seemed that money was never a cure—merely a palliative sometimes—for the fiercest of the pains men suffer. "Brains and heart, brains and heart," she kept saying to herself, "not money at all." Then there came to her an overwhelming sense of the enormous burden imposed by laying upon the brain and heart the sins and pains of the world. What had she to do with them? Her life had been arranged for her so that she could live almost without knowledge of the things that hurt and soil. Then she thought of Marshall—of the man as she was beginning to know him—and of Margaret Lawrence, and she looked at the poor wife at the bedhead and her eyes filled with tears.

## Chapter XII

### IN THE GORILLA'S LAIR, IN THE MADISON SQUARE ROOF GARDEN, AND IN THE PART OF PROVIDENCE

If it is more blessed to give than to receive, it is strange that we should each have two ears and only one tongue.

LEONORA LE MARK had taken a great fancy to Mary Ellerton. There was promise of something like friendship, as the result of close contact for a month, between two quite dissimilar souls.

To Leonora orthodoxy was a fetish. She was also a ritualist, and in everything she did it was more important that a prescribed course should be followed than that any result should be obtained, or rather, to follow a method was result enough in itself. She was attracted by the formulæ of organised charity and the methods of Settlement work. Mary Ellerton had too many doubts to be in anything orthodox, and she was intellectually too impatient to follow a ritual with a steadfast spirit.

Leonora had asked Mary to go to the Le Mark house for a day or two before starting for Cape Ann—an invitation that was accepted with reluctance, and only because there was no real excuse for declining it. It happened, however, that shortly before the

date fixed, Mary received a letter from Mrs. Thane; and in the same envelope, as an enclosure of possible interest, there was a note from Mr. John T. Grant to Mrs. Thane about an opportunity for investment, and a circular describing bonds secured by a mortgage on the Marshall Iron and Steel Works.

Mr. Grant thought well of the bonds. He had taken a block of them himself—as had many of his friends, among them Mr. Le Mark. The bonds were not to be sold to the general public, but offered to persons selected by the underwriting syndicate. The circular was a confidential communication. Mr. Grant had particular reasons for believing that the bonds were a safe investment.

The prospect of a night at the Le Marks', where she would probably meet the Gorilla, became suddenly interesting to Mary, and she was frankly cordial on next seeing Leonora. Mr. Le Mark was highly pleased to have Miss Ellerton in his house. He offered his arm to take her in to dinner. He called her attention to the family portraits; he was particular to tell her the history of any of his possessions that caught her eye and of many that did not. He told her of the presents with which he had periodically honoured the late Mrs. Le Mark. He was determined that she should know him at last for the very important person he was.

After dinner he asked if she minded the flavour of an Havana smoked in the open air, and, being reassured on that point, he invited her to join him on the piazza beyond his sitting-room at the back of the house—a hanging piazza it proved to be, overlooking

a bit of yard, an alley, and a stable. The piazza itself was overrun by a *Wistaria*, no longer in bloom, but a good green vine, not so thick as Japanese *Ampelopsis*.

Mary made herself agreeable. Leonora was pleased, and Le Mark was delighted. He paid his guest fulsome compliments and felt about for information concerning her private affairs; he assumed that she made large investments and implied that it would be to him a grateful task to assist her with advice.

Mary was perfectly cool before these thrusts. She warded them without seeming to combat him; she made him talk and admitted nothing. Finally she said that Mrs. Thane had been advised to take some of the bonds of the Marshall Iron and Steel Works and asked him if he knew of the bonds. Le Mark waved his hand, flicked his ashes, and said pompously:

"I do know something of them, Miss Ellerton. I may say that I know all about them. That loan offered one of those opportunities that come as a privilege to a man in my position. Young Marshall is, I believe, a very worthy person—of plain origin, you understand—but entirely respectable. It was necessary for the success of his business and to save his inheritance that he should borrow a few hundred thousand dollars. He found it impossible in these times to negotiate the loan through ordinary channels and came to me for assistance. I carefully investigated the value of his security and got together a party of my friends to underwrite the bonds. While a great service was rendered to Marshall, I am convinced my friends have a safe investment."

At this point Mary inserted a question.

"You think that the works are paying—are manufacturing at a profit?"

Le Mark threw up both hands.

"My dear young lady, I really cannot answer for that. Nothing is paying at present, but I think the value of the property is ample security for the loan."

"Do you mean, Mr. Le Mark, that you think the real estate is security enough in itself?"

"Quite so, the land and the buildings."

"Have these bonds been mostly taken, Mr. Le Mark, by conservative men like yourself? Mrs. Thane says Mr. John T. Grant has bought some of them."

"Yes, they are mostly in the very best hands; Grant has some, Mather, Garrison; I think that if you take a block you will be in excellent company. I do not mind telling you confidentially, Miss Ellerton, in strictest confidence, please, that there are reasons why these bonds are as good as gold."

"But, dear Mr. Le Mark, I want to ask you a question. I hope you won't think I am very stupid. I am only a woman, you know. If the works are not profitable, how is Mr.—Marshall, did you say?—to pay his interest? Do you think there is so much value in the land that in foreclosing the bondholders would have full protection?"

Le Mark looked at her with admiration.

"Precisely," he said. "You have hit the nail squarely on the head; the land is valuable."

"For other purposes than for manufacturing?"

"Well, yes," Le Mark admitted. "I suppose there are other purposes for which it could be used. Ha!



I wonder if you have heard that Mrs. Netherby is to be in town to-morrow. I have an appointment with her in connection with a matter of public importance. I believe she goes east again the following day. A very useful woman, Mrs. Netherby—an invaluable woman."

Mary was full of interest in this topic, especially as she felt that Leonora had been rather left out in the talk about the bonds. Mrs. Netherby's right ear should have burned, indeed, so much was said in praise of her many accomplishments. Before Mary went to bed she had written a note to Mrs. Netherby asking if she might be allowed to accompany her on her journey to the "North Shore."

Mrs. Netherby came sailing in at luncheon time the next day, just as Leonora had painfully framed a sentence in her mind, to be put as a question to Mary, asking why she had spoken of Mr. Marshall the evening before as if she knew him so little as not to be quite sure of his name. Madam covered Mary with kisses, assured her that it would be perfect to have her as a travelling companion to Boston—or to Jericho for that matter.

"But, my dear, you must go our gait. Dear me! I have not told you that Mr. Netherby escorts us. It is a great occasion; we are going to New York to-morrow; we spend the night there and go on to Boston the next day. I have promised to share, for one evening, my husband's vulgar pleasures; we are going to the Madison Square Roof Garden to drink beer. We might leave you at the hotel, but I am sure you will not mind giving Mr. Netherby the

pleasure of your company. He would be quite willing to leave me at the hotel and take you to the Garden, but I could not permit that, you know. *Que dites vous?* Will you go with us and share our joys and perils?"

Mary said she would be charmed. "You know, Mrs. Netherby, I have never seen you and Mr. Netherby together, and I have never been to the roof garden. There will be abundant excitement."

Mrs. Netherby made a face at Mary, and, with a shower of talk about nothing, directed at Leonora for the sake of politeness, sailed off—"to keep my appointment with your wonderful father, my dear. I doubt if you know at all what a man he is."

When the travellers met at the station the next day, Mary thought she detected in Mr. Netherby's appearance some concessions to Mrs. Netherby's taste in the matter of dress. He looked a little more like other people than when she had seen him before, and he was less eccentric in manner and talk. He confided to her on the way to New York that the present expedition was not unlike others that occasionally came off.

"Odd, you know, but wife and I hit it off well enough for a bit; no real incompatibility of temper; tastes differ, that's all. Catch her alone, she's not so bad. She comes to the farm and we embrace, but we don't often travel together. So happens, both going to Boston; wife wants to stop in New York and go to the garden; hopes some one will see her there with a queer man; talk—verge of scandal; indignation, explanation—virtuous wife watching hus-

band through a night in Gotham. Understand you've been in darkest Morchester, and two nights in Afric's darkest depths—in the fierce Gorilla's lair, in fact; how did the beast behave to—to you?"

Mary laughed. "He was quite gentle, Mr. Netherby, and most attentive; and he had so much that was interesting to tell me! He even gave me some advice."

"Miss—Miss Ellerton, you frighten me. How many perils encompass beauty—alone in a wicked world!"

"He wants me to buy some of the bonds of the Marshall Steel Works."

Mr. Netherby leaned back in his chair and kicked at a cushion. His wife gave him a mildly protesting look over the top of her newspaper.

"I would n't," he said, "I would n't. No pressing pecuniary cares, no family to provide for; why take the price of blood?"

"Is this a particularly bloody bond, Mr. Netherby?"

Mrs. Netherby lowered her paper and asked, "What in the world are you two talking about?"

"Business, my dear," her husband answered, "business of the most private nature."

At this answer Mrs. Netherby swung round in her chair, turning her back and affecting great dudgeon.

Mr. Netherby leaned forward and said behind his hand, "It is written in blood; conspiracy, rank, foul—nothing less."

"Do you mind explaining to a discreet person?"

"Not at all, but be discreet; in any case, don't quote me. The matter is simple: Quixotic young

man; has a legacy to pay over to his sister; no ready money; falls by cursed chance into Le Mark's clutches (Mrs. Netherby's newspaper quivered perceptibly at this point); mortgage executed; outrageous terms; hopeless case; foreclosure sure to come, or so the syndicate believes; property goes for half a million, more or less; syndicate sells it for a million or more to the M. & L. E.; railroad tried hard to buy it in old Marshall's time; bet you five to one, tens or hundreds, Garrison's in the syndicate."

Mary looked shocked. She said: "I wish I could see you oftener, Mr. Netherby. You are so clever and wise, and you seem to know everything. I shall never feel safe without consulting you. How wicked such things are!"

Mrs. Netherby interposed here. She had finished her paper, was ready to talk to Mary, and convinced that Mr. Netherby was suffering for tobacco; she sent him off to smoke and entertained Mary for the rest of the journey. In New York they put up at the Waldorf, and after dinner went, according to programme, to the Madison Square Roof Garden.

They had been there for an hour, trying hard to extract a little amusement from the variety show, listening to music that failed, as it happened, to arouse their interest, watching the people, first with a mild interest, then with weariness. They had ceased talking as if a conversation must be sustained, and only when an excuse offered made occasional observations.

Nearly behind Mary there was an artificial palm, and on the other side of it was another table about

which sat two women and a man. For some time Mary had now and then caught phrases or sentences from their conversation, but she had not felt enough interest to know in the least what had been said; there remained only a general impression of the irksomeness of inane talk when it is common as well as stupid; a regret that people should have such voices and use such English.

After a pause Mrs. Netherby leaned over to her husband, who sat opposite Mary, and was in the act of trying to make him see some people she had discovered in the distance, when Mary heard a new voice at the table behind the palm.

"Excuse me a minute, I want to speak to this lady,"—a little lower: "Look here, Em. It's just good luck I ran on you here. I want to tell you I've been in Morchester. I meant to write, but I've been too busy. I want to tell you to keep your eye on that husband of yours. He's taking a good deal of notice of another young woman, a New York girl, too, very handsome and got lots of money. Her name is Ellerton. Her father and mother are dead, and she lives in Morchester with her aunt. I can't think now of the aunt's name."

"I'm much obliged," was the answer, in a somewhat disturbed voice, "but I'm not afraid."

"Well, that's your business," the first voice retorted. "I've given you my warning, and if you think a young man like that ain't likely to take up with another girl when he lives away from his wife, no matter how high-toned he is, why, you're just foolish. I tell you, Em, it's ridiculous to live in the way

you do anyway. If you can't live together, why don't you get divorced?"

"That is our business, it seems to me."

"Oh, very well. I thought it my duty to tell you what's going on. You can do as you like, of course."

Mary had been listening intently without any outward show of interest. She felt herself getting hot and cold. She was astonished that she should have such a sickening sensation at the heart. What were these people and their talk to her? What man were they talking about? and what mattered it if any man she knew in Morchester had a wife *perdue* in New York. True, there was one man about whom she would not like to believe it, but it could not possibly be true of him, nor of Churchill. Was it Delaney Plunkett?—she had not met him a half dozen times; or possibly McLean?—she had not seen much of him, yet such rumours have little to do with probabilities. She was outraged at being so spoken of, in such a place—her name given to vulgar people as that of a person from whom a husband was to be saved!

Mrs. Netherby, turning her attention again to Mary, noticed something in her face that she had never seen there before—an expression that was hard and cold, that plainly showed weariness and contempt. The good lady was a little shocked and almost annoyed. To be sure, the entertainment was not of a high order, but, for once in a way, it was not so abominable that one need look like that.

"My dear," she said, "I am afraid you are not enjoying our simple pleasures?"

Mr. Netherby, looking now at Mary, rose at once.

"Not enjoying herself! Why, she 's ill. Come, Jane, let 's get her out of here."

He rose. Mary tried to protest, but she could not find her voice. Mrs. Netherby was up, and Mary was obliged to follow. But, before leaving the table, she turned and took in the party behind the palm with one rapid glance. It was now made up of four persons. The man looked to be of the class that without a regular income or occupation has money at command; he probably found frequent occasions to insist that he was a gentleman. On his right sat a woman who was possibly his wife; if not, she should have been. She wore much jet, rather suspicious-looking diamonds, and a wedding-ring a quarter of an inch wide; she had a hard face, although her features were good and pearl powder had been used abundantly. The woman who had been in Morchester was tall, thin, and middle-aged, of the kind that is to be seen in curl papers and a calico wrapper when not in a gorgeous street costume. Finally there was the young woman with a derelict husband—distinctly pretty, much more respectable in appearance than her companions, well dressed, sad of face.

One glance was enough; Mary Ellerton would not fail to know her again. The Netherbys did not notice Mary's scrutiny of the people on the other side of the palm. They thought she was worn out with the heat in Morchester's slums and they kindly saw her to her room in the hotel.

On the way to Boston the next day Mary had a short *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Netherby. She asked rather abruptly: "Supposing Mr. Marshall is not able to pay

the interest on his mortgage, will that be the first sign of trouble, or will there be some premonitory difficulties?"

Mr. Netherby tipped his head back for one quick look at her and replied off-hand:

"Bless you, no. He will pay as long as he can borrow. He must have notes out. As long as he can keep them going, paying or renewing, negotiating fresh ones, he will pay his coupons. Notes or promises to pay are called paper. He offers his paper to a broker who sells it to the banks or to any one that will take it. Marshall says: 'I promise to pay ten thousand dollars in sixty days with interest at six per cent.' the broker takes the note and finds some one who will lend on it ten thousand less sixty days' interest—and a percentage. This money passes through the broker's hands and another percentage sticks to his fingers. Young man pays high for his money; costs him more than he can make with it. Ruin in the end."

"But, Mr. Netherby, is not that the usual way of running a business? Why cannot Mr. Marshall's business pay as well as another?"

"No reason why it should n't as far as I know; dare say it would, given time and capital. Not much capital, I fancy; no one making money nowadays."

Mary reflected a few moments; then she said slowly:

"If there should happen to be any one willing to take Mr. Marshall's notes and keep renewing them if necessary, I suppose he might go on indefinitely?"

Mr. Netherby took another look at Mary; this time a rather longer one.



"Undoubtedly," he said, somewhat dryly.

Mary now looked at Mr. Netherby in a way that made him wink, and she kept a steady eye upon him as she spoke with composure and deliberation.

"I need a confidant and friend, not an adviser this time,"—with a faint smile. "I know of no one I can trust except you. Will you do me a favour?"

Mr. Netherby looked doubtful.

"Can't say; try me."

"You are going back to Morchester shortly, you say?"

"Praise God I am, if He permits."

"Can you arrange that some one, who cannot be identified with you or me, shall buy Mr. Marshall's paper if he cannot negotiate it elsewhere on favourable terms—provided my bankers satisfy you that I can take care of it and I agree to do so?"

Mr. Netherby stared at his interlocutor for at least three seconds. He said:

"Think I can; not sure I will; don't quite like an unlimited order; mind mentioning the amount to which you are prepared to back—ahem—this business?"

Mary asked for a pencil and wrote on the margin of a newspaper a row of figures, signed her initials, tore off the marked bit, and handed it to him. He looked at it, at her, adjusted his eye-glasses, and looked at the scrap of paper again. After a little he spoke hesitatingly:

"Beg pardon; ought to warn you; might lose every blessed cent; can you afford it?"

The answer was prompt and unhesitating:

"Yes, twice as much if I choose—a fact I am sure you will never reveal to any one."

Mr. Netherby put the bit of paper in his vest pocket, took off his hat, sought counsel in it, lifted his head, and spoke:

"Madame La Comtesse de Monte Cristo, your confidence will not prove to be misplaced. God forbid I should expose you to the dangers that would follow—follow the revelation of your identity. How's that for a speech? I'm bowled over; never so flattered in my life; like you better than any one I know. Bother letter to bankers; you arrange all that. Count me an ally for—for the war; details later. We'll cook the Gorilla; I gather you owe him one; I owe him a dozen; 'nough said; here's the wife."

Mrs. Netherby had been talking with an acquaintance bound for Newport. She returned to them with, "Well, I wonder what on earth you two have been talking about."

"Notes and impressions, Jane; books you don't read."

"Dear me, Mary, is n't he rude?" and Mrs. Netherby composed herself for a nap.

## Chapter XIII

### THE NORTH SHORE

"In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."

THE Lawrences had a house, built for summer use, on Cape Ann; it overlooked woods, sea, and shore. They also had a horse named George, after the first President of the Republic—not as a memorial tribute to a great man, but in recognition of qualities in the horse that established a relationship with the hero. George was large and strong, of good stock; he had courage, dignity, patience, a high feeling of self-respect, and a level head; he never disappointed the expectations of the just. By the aid of George, a two-seated waggon holding four, and bicycles, the Lawrences and their guests lived all over the Cape. They generally slept in their own house, but they had been known to go for an afternoon drive and telephone from Newburyport to the cook that they would be home the next day at about one.

They loved "The Cape"; the Manchester and Essex woods. They could find the Agassiz rock; but what was that to the blue visual mists among the pines, to the bars of light that lay across dark stems,

or blazed here and there a tree trunk in the gloom under thickly knitted boughs? Mt. Ann was familiar ground; they were authoritative on Dog-Town Common; they dropped in for luncheon at Turk's Head Inn; they knew the Finns at the Rockport quarries, the artists at Annisquam, the boat builders at Essex, the river at Ipswich. They drove the West Parish road—past the willows and the tupelo trees; by bits of meadow, among the huge granite ledges; by bright blue bights of sea, separated from the darker sea beyond by sand dunes of delicate greys and buffs that so went with the blue of the water and the blue of the sky that one shouted to see it, and rode miles, again and again, to take in that wonderful harmony. They knew where of an afternoon, from the signal-service station, one could see across Squam River the western skies, beyond the reaches of Coffin's Beach, and witness now and then a sunset glory to awake new faith in Heaven.

They loved the Cape's gaunt ledges, and the interminable tumble of boulders overgrown with lichens and nested in an indefatigable vegetation that has a tree, a bush, a frond, for every cranny. They delighted in the cold sea-water that made a bath an intoxication, and in the wandering wood paths that led one never knew whither, but always to something interesting—to a pond, a giant boulder, to the Hermit's of a Sunday afternoon.

The Lawrences were the sort of people whose servants are almost as permanent as andirons. One can conceive of getting new andirons, but one seldom does. The whole household went together—away

for the summer and back for the rest of the year; it was not a household in perpetual dislocation. Servants of the andiron kind can always find for you or for a friend some of their friends; and the Lawrences' familiars had recommended the domestics for Mary Ellerton's cottage, which was a cottage, or nearer that than a normal house, a palace, or a villa. Mary had seen it and taken it in a swift visit in May. It was "let furnished," but further furnished from boxes she had forwarded and Margaret had opened. By August 1st it was garnished and occupied, ready for its mistress. Mrs. Thane arrived and was installed in advance of her hostess, who, as we know, had taken two days for her journey that she might go on with the Netherbys.

Mary's apologies to Mrs. Thane were graciously accepted. That lady was comfortable, and, after a certain age, comfort covers a multitude of sins—even other people's. Mary's forethought and Margaret's skill had made the cottage charming; Mrs. Thane found at hand so many of the things she liked to have about her that she was still purring when her niece arrived. Not far away Emily Marshall and Miss Thomas had three bedrooms and a sitting-room in a cottage, near a hotel where they went for their meals. Emily had taken the third room that she might enjoy the proud feeling of having a place for Theodore even on Cape Ann, if he chose to occupy it.

Mrs. Netherby had taken for the fourth summer a villa at East Manchester. She imagined that her Morchester mind was always keyed up a little by contact with the intellects of Boston. This tonic

influence made it easier, she felt, to hold her own in her natal town, where she occupied, by grace of a good digestion and native energy, a somewhat more important position than merely inert and unassuming merit could hope to maintain.

Mary had promptly asked Emily and Miss Thomas to tea and conscientiously begun the task of establishing an intimacy with Theodore Marshall's sister. This she found to be difficult because Emily had rather an empty little head and heart, but she found Miss Thomas decidedly congenial, quite as good company as Churchill, then at the Lawrences—a man with whom she liked to talk; Miss Thomas was, naturally, a person who did not demand the reserves that must be practised with a man.

Miss Thomas and Emily were at the cottage one afternoon when Mrs. Netherby arrived after a long drive from Manchester. She had a cup of tea and explained that she had not come only to pay a visit; she wanted to take Mary back with her for a few days. Mary flatly refused. She had found rest for the sole of her foot; she was her aunt's hostess; she stayed where she was. Mrs. Netherby was put out; she wanted a young woman.

Her critical eye had been estimating Emily, who was undeniably pretty, with delicate features, a rich complexion, and a figure that was near to perfection. She went over to this possibility—to her Emily was nothing more—and talked to her. The woman of the world—albeit Morchester is not a capital—drew Emily out, made her show her paces, such as they were, and subtly gave her a feeling of consequence

that helped her wonderfully. In ten minutes Mrs. Netherby had determined to risk it. She told Emily that she was alone, not entertaining at present; she might have an occasional visitor in the house, but no gaiety, no formality; would Emily give her a week? She would like to ask Miss Thomas, but she felt that if Emily should go alone it would be easier; they would be more together; and possibly Miss Thomas might like quite as well to be left a little to herself. Miss Thomas was appealed to and in the end it was arranged that Emily should go down by train in the morning.

That evening Churchill called at the cottage and entertained both ladies for an hour with his affected scepticism, his real serious-mindedness, and the oddity of his comment—his deductions from phenomena seen with one eye fanatical and one philosophical, eyes that never focussed together for clear vision. Unable to look steadfastly at any one aspect, he was continually shifting his position to get another view. He was active in mind, weak and irresolute in purpose. Miss Thomas would have said that his sentence was pronounced in a too much quoted apothegm to be found in holy writ, and Churchill would have said he knew the quotation referred to; moreover, he would have admitted its justice as applied to himself, with a reservation affirming the folly of trusting rules, to which there were always exceptions. His impulses were usually good; his principles were high; he was naturally impetuous, and like water he followed the path of least resistance. However, he was intelligent, and talked more and better on a

greater variety of subjects than most American men; in fact, and he knew it to his mortification, he could not help talking of what was uppermost in his mind.

And so it came about that after Mrs. Thane had gone in, afraid of the night air, leaving Churchill alone with Mary, he began to make evident his feeling for her and to touch guardedly, delicately upon their relations. He wanted to suggest a mutual understanding and sympathy that would give him the privileges of a sentimental intimacy, and to do it so warily that her straightforwardness would be no hindrance in the path he wished to explore—one with all the fascinations of delicate love-making, but leading—whither? . Ah! there would be time to think of that later.

Such a temperament as Churchill's is sensitive; it knows by instinct if not by experience how fast to go; when to pause; when to make another advance; but it is the temperament of a manœuvring tactician who lets slip the occasion for a decisive assault. If Churchill touched Mary in the least as he desired, it was because she was not experienced in such tactics. Her conversation with men, except perhaps with Marshall, had been Yea, yea, Nay, nay. She had never played with the fire that scorches Psyche's wings. The incense that burns in that fire had never been in her nostrils before, and it awakened a faint thrill of curiosity—possibly of pleasure. After all, for most mortals it is not an ill-savoured vapour.

He had a finished skill—this man with no real work in the world, who watched, noted, experimented with his nerves, and spun in his mind phantom scenes in



which he gave himself curious parts. He surrounded the woman that had filled his imagination with an atmosphere of deference, of unostentatious devotion, of admiration, that would have been dangerous with its suggestive fragrance, if it had not been so thin that in it one could not draw deep breath.

In the languors of summer airs, in the luxurious life, in the absence of all care or responsibility, in removal from even the sight of the world's distress, he had his opportunity and he made the most of it according to his lights. He gave no occasion for rebuke; he did not insist too much in seeking her nor on seeing her alone. He avoided any action that might excite the comment of others or give her an excuse for checking him. He simply let her see that respectfully, asking nothing but tolerance, he admired her to the verge of love, probably beyond.

All this affected Mary when she was alone with Churchill, as might too many roses in a closed room. She fled to the Lawrences or to Miss Thomas for air, and, so refreshed, was still able to enjoy roses in moderation.

Meanwhile Emily was making acquaintance with a world that until then she had hardly entered. Balzac has somewhere some clever talk about *la grande dame* and *la femme comme il faut*. The distinction exists, more or less definitely, in every developed society. The great lady is always more hardy, having an absolute assurance of position, than the woman who feels that she must at least appear to respect propriety. Mrs. Netherby, if not quite *la grande dame*, even according to Morchester's standards, was

determined to play the part as she understood it—*con amore*—if she died for it.

She liked to maintain an "establishment," to have a man cook, a butler and a butler's assistant, a footman as well as a coachman on the box. She would not have thought it necessary to call a buckish friend to her carriage window to explain why the footman—who had gone to have a tooth pulled—was absent from duty that morning, but if in any way she failed in respect to what "smart" people called "form," she would have been slightly annoyed, and she would have been more comfortable after incidentally offering an explanation.

Mrs. Netherby justly felt that there was no one in the United States of America who, by reason of riches or smartness, was so highly placed as not to be her natural intimate if circumstances favoured an acquaintance. Whether she knew them or not, she spoke of people who were conspicuously smart with easy familiarity, as if there existed a bond the whole world must recognise. She was kind enough to include in the circle of those entitled to her intimacy all foreigners of rank of whom she had occasion to speak; there was something amiably patronising in her mention of the Prince of Wales; yet Mrs. Netherby was at bottom a good soul, motherly, and a trifle unsophisticated.

Emily Marshall was impressed with a summer villa furnished like a house in town; with the French maid that unpacked her box and offered other attentions; with the length of time she had to wait for dinner; with its formal announcement; with Mrs. Netherby's full dress; with the butlers, number one and number

two; with champagne—for two women. She felt that she was tasting life at last. She liked driving with Madam in her victoria, bowing to other people in victorias or family carriages or shining traps.

When they met on the morning of the second day, Mrs. Netherby announced that her friend, Mr. McLean, who was on his way up the coast in a yacht now lying at Marblehead, was coming with another man that evening to dine; that dinner would be early—seven o'clock, and that after dinner they were to drive to the club to see some fireworks. Emily was in great excitement, but she tried hard to appear as if the programme of the evening were on the whole a dull one, although to be tolerated *faute de mieux*.

The other man proved to be a good-looking old beau from New York, named Tillingham, as easy and unconventional in his manners as a schoolboy at home. His English was not perfect; he did not appear to aspire to be perfect in any respect, but he was jolly and pleasant. Mrs. Netherby found him excellent company, and chatted away with him about people she had never seen in her life as if she were in the habit of meeting them three times a day. The Hon. Felix was having a short holiday. He had been in Newport and had come from there with his agreeable friend; they were on their way to Bar Harbour, McLean intending his visit to be taken as homage to Miss Conny Plunkett, whose favour he thought of seeking with more fervour than he had hitherto shown. The fact was, McLean could not look into the future without considerable anxiety concerning ways and means. His speculations had not been

going well, and Miss Plunkett was known to be rich.

When the honourable senator found himself next at table to a decidedly pretty girl, young and fresh, a little embarrassed yet doing her best to conceal it; when he remembered that she had an assured income of some twelve thousand a year, and saw that Mrs. Netherby, for the moment, could do very well without him, he made an effort to be agreeable to his neighbour.

In a party so small he could not talk to her as if they were alone, as one can sometimes talk to a woman at a larger dinner. He did not try to; he attempted rather to interpret to her the talk between Mrs. Netherby, Tillingham, and himself—he taking only a sufficient part to keep a footing. He merely kept up a scattering fire of comments and explanations, and did it so effectively as to make her feel that she belonged to the party; to feel also that he was very considerate and courteous. He made her talk a little herself by appealing to her, and skilfully covered her lack of knowledge whenever he could. By the time they rose from the table, Emily, who had drunk more wine than was her habit, felt herself quite a woman of the world; she was getting an assured manner that suited her and made Mrs. Netherby feel that her experiment might turn out better than after the first twelve hours she had been able to hope.

At the club house they made their way to the upper piazza and secured a corner, McLean sitting behind Emily at the end of the row so that as he leaned for-

ward to talk to her, and she to one side to listen, they were, for purposes of conversation, very much alone.

McLean loved the pursuit of women as some men love trout-fishing, and he went about his sport as painstakingly as an angler about his. They were no sooner secure in their corner than he said with a quiet assumption of old acquaintance—upon the best possible terms:

"What a lucky chance that I should have found you at Mrs. Netherby's. Tillingham is such a talker! I should have been a fifth wheel if you had not been there. I expected to have a dull time—to be quite left out. You don't mind my expressing my gratitude?"

Emily asked in a low voice, making it necessary for him to bend nearer, "Are you commonly so grateful for small things?"

He answered close to her ear: "It was not a small thing; it was a great one, and it is a greater still to have you in this corner. I cannot tell you how glad I am to know you. I have wished to very much. Does it strike you that women like you are so abundant in Morchester that I am likely to be indifferent to the opportunity I have this evening?"

"You must know best, Mr. McLean. You go everywhere. I am only just out of school, and I do not know any one."

"Very well. You acknowledge that I am in a position to offer a weighty opinion; that you have no right to contradict, if I insist that it is a long time since Morchester has given me such a pleasure as I have found in Manchester; and it is a pleasure I may

count on in Morchester next winter, is it not? You will not forget that we are acquaintances when we are in town again?"

Emily was almost trembling with excitement; she knew that she was on hazardous ground. She was not such a fool as to be ignorant that she could not allow this sort of thing to go too far without danger; at the same time the temptation to go a little further was to her very great. A rocket gave an opportunity for a diversion.

"Look, look!" she said. "Oh! was n't it perfect?"

"How long are you going to be with Mrs. Netherby?" came in smooth tones from McLean.

"Only three or four days; I am staying a little way up the coast."

"Do you mind if I stop here for a day or two? I was going with Tillingham to-morrow. I really want to know you, and if you will let me I will wait and go on by train."

"I suppose you can do as you like," Emily said, with an affectation of carelessness, "but I think your reasons for staying sound rather absurd, don't you?"

"Please don't say that, Miss Marshall."

Another rocket came to her rescue.

The pace was getting hot, and for a few minutes they turned their attention to the pin wheels and blue-lights, and to Mrs. Netherby, who felt bound as a chaperon to cut in for a while on what she suspected was on McLean's part a fierce flirtation. Her mental reflection was, "that scamp, McLean."

Presently they left their seats. Mrs. Netherby and Tillingham became entangled with some friends, and

McLean took Emily onto the lawn. He was an engaging rascal when he tried to please; Emily really attracted him in a way; he was getting old enough to find a charm in her youth and in her limited experience.

Before the evening was over he had gone much further than he intended at the beginning. Emily was a little awed by his aplomb, his power of saying significant things that she could not take hold of, and his evident intention of going as far as she would let him.

The men slept at the Masconomo House. On the drive home Emily was almost ill with the effort to talk to Mrs. Netherby as if nothing had happened. It was long before she could sleep. She had been taken by surprise, and she was not prepared to match her slender training against the art of an adept.

Tillingham pulled anchor and sailed the following day, but McLean actually stayed, and in two or three days had carried on so with Emily that the poor little thing was like a hypnotised bird, and Mrs. Netherby was seriously angry. McLean was in a reckless mood and hard to manage. Finally Mrs. Netherby cornered him and read him the law and the gospel. She insisted upon his taking himself off without delay. He would not go away without seeing Emily again and alone. Mrs. Netherby positively refused to allow it. As a compromise there was a constrained meeting in Mrs. Netherby's presence and McLean took leave. Emily went back to Miss Thomas bewildered and depressed, full of vague expectations, doubts, and self-reproach.

## Chapter XIV

### FERGUS FRANK BRINGS CHURCHILL TO BOOK

Nothing emphasises more strongly the gulf between God and man than the queer work made by man in trying to exercise the Divine function of governing.

**M**IDWAY in his dream of love Churchill was summoned home. He knew that he must go, and he went as reluctantly as a man leaves his tippie to face an angry wife.

There are certain old houses in Morchester, once the best in the town, that are now mostly given over to offices for lawyers. Just after dark, one evening in August, Churchill let himself into a house of this description by a latch-key,—the outer door having been closed for the night,—and made his way along a dark passage to a flight of stairs, with the assured step of a man who knows his way. He went to the second story and knocked at a door. A voice called, "Come in," and Churchill entered an imperfectly lighted room where a man of about his own age sat near an open window smoking a pipe. Without getting up the man said, "How are you, Russell? I am glad to see you; take a pipe."

Churchill found a pipe on a table, filled it, lit it, took a chair, and said interrogatively, "Well?"



The other man began with an echo of this over-worked exclamation.

"Well! old man, I thought it time you came back. You know there is such a thing as overdoing the summer holiday. It does not look well for a reformer to be away from his bailiwick when the political pot is actually boiling."

Churchill spoke somewhat sullenly: "I see that you are going to support the Chicago platform, free silver, and Bryan."

To this the other man replied tranquilly: "I am going to support the platform of my party and to stand with the people who are robbed against the robbers, and if to do so means free silver and Bryan ——" He shrugged his shoulders and then added, "What are you going to do?"

"I certainly shall not go in for free silver."

"You like the idea of McKinley, of a prohibitive tariff as a revenue raiser, of continued protection for a class and oppression for the people?"

"Not particularly."

"No? Then I wish you would find a party or policy you do like well enough to work for it. You have gifts for a certain sort of political writing. It seems to me it would be well if you would try to utilise them. There are dangers in idleness."

"What do you mean to imply by that?"

"My dear fellow, I was merely stating a general proposition as old as the hills. I own it was a trite observation; but allow me to proceed. You are a man of principles—high ideals as to honesty and the sanctity of obligations. You can ply what is called

a trenchant pen; are you going to allow it to rust while every political iniquity conceivable is practised under the plea of saving the country?"

"What are you driving at?"

"Why, simply this: that to save the gold standard enough votes are to be bought to elect McKinley, if it takes millions to do it. The banks, railroads, corporations, capitalists, manufacturers are to supply the money; the politicians are to spend it. They take it for their needs and in return give the capitalists the legislation they desire. Do you not find food for reflection in such a combination? That is the great national ring—the Republican party and the money party, each for the other and both for plunder. Sooner or later, if not this time another, the people will enter a protest against this alliance that will bring it to an end, with convulsions such as this country has not seen. For my part I had as lief the trouble would come with free silver as with revolution."

Churchill answered this long harangue with some spirit.

"Let us suppose I agree in a general way to much of what you have been saying, nevertheless, I am not going to consent to a bad measure simply because in opposing it I shall have disagreeable company. Free silver would be an economic blunder and an outrage against morals, as you very well know. There is the same greed and dishonesty in the combination of mine owners and debtors as in the other combination, and as to the venal use of money, the silver people will have no more scruples than the gold people."

The other man made an impatient gesture and said quickly:

"Of course; but, admitting your last statements, I do not concur in your opinion that the free coinage of silver at the old ratio is an economic and moral evil. Grant that both sides are governed by interest, on the side I oppose you have an enormous and growing power that threatens to nullify civic liberty by making our political system a sham, and to enslave the people by taxing and cheating them so that there is no escape from poverty. On the other side, what is there? The union of capitalists of a single class with the poor, the oppressed, all who are instinctively in revolt against the only present coalition that threatens our institutions. Let me go further and admit for the sake of argument that free silver means a certain measure of repudiation; is that as bad as the extortion that has been going on for years in the exaction of eight or ten per cent. for loans to poor farmers who produce the wealth that accumulates in other hands? Suppose railroads and corporations are forced into bankruptcy, it may mean hardship to those who have been enjoying accumulated wealth, but it will not mean the actual destruction of property of intrinsic value—rather its redistribution and the wiping out of obligations it was criminal to impose; possibly no better thing could happen."

Churchill shook his head.

"You are practising for the stump, Fergus; what is the use of talking such stuff to me. What becomes of a man, still able to pay, who repudiates his debts, and whines about having consented under pressure

to bargains he thinks were hard? What becomes of his credit, his reputation, his title to respect? Do you seriously advocate a policy for your country that no individual could follow and hold up his head?"

The man Churchill called Fergus did not seem particularly impressed by this appeal in behalf of the honour of his country; he did not even attempt to reply to it; he dropped the discussion on the merits of the case, as between the platforms of the parties, and returned to a question he had asked before:

"That is all very well, but I want to know whether you are willing to fight an evil that admits of no differences of opinion among honest men. There is a plan on foot to collect in Morchester a campaign fund of a quarter of a million of dollars for the use of the National Committee of the Republican party. It will be a levy upon the interests that are especially in the keeping of that party. You cannot doubt that it will be employed in part at least for improper purposes. Are you willing to use what facts I can give you about it, and those you are able to collect from other sources, in a series of articles for the *Argus*, revealing the iniquity of such a proceeding and the insincerity of the pretence that the money is to be used only for educational purposes?"

"How about the Democratic campaign fund?" Churchill asked.

The answer was immediate:

"Attack it as much as you please, expose the whole matter of secret expenditure for party purposes. I am bound to say, however, for the sake of frankness, that there will be relatively so little money contribu-

ted on the Democratic side that all you may say, as far as it counts for anything, will tell mostly against the Republicans."

"You wish me to attack in the rear the party in which I enlist?"

"I wish you to attack a great abuse, a demoralising practice, without regard to whose withers are wrung."

"In the absence of proof that the money collected is improperly used, do you think we have a right to assume that it is?"

"Russell, you are sometimes childish. Do you believe there is a man of affairs—a man who has had any contact with the world—in the entire area of the United States, who supposes for an instant that these great campaign funds are used for legitimate purposes only? You certainly have a right to assume as true what no one doubts—that is, their misuse. I believe the politicians do sometimes give assurances to squeamish persons that such and such money will be used for such and such purposes. If the pledges are kept the result is simply to liberate other money for other purposes. Come, will you undertake the crusade?"

Churchill hesitated. At last he said:

"I can't say now. I will let you know in a few days, after I have studied the subject further. Was this matter all you wanted to see me about, Fergus?"

"I have nothing else to say at present, Russell. Have you anything to say to me?"

"Nothing. Good-night."

"Wait a bit. I understand that you are to be in Morchester from now on?"

"Do you exact it?"

"I think I must, for your sake quite as much as for other reasons. By the way, I may as well say that the Dukes and the machine have selected that flower of our civilisation, Deacon Le Mark, to take up the collection. I think he will not be backward in assuring any one that he is saving the country; that the money is all to be spent on tracts. He is a beautiful bloom of our times and our manners. They have picked him out because, being less ingenuous than any one of the Dukes—pretending to a social position, and consequent virtue, that they do not affect—he will make it appear that his asking sanctifies the act of the giver; that every check contributed to the corruption fund will ease a soul like a great gift to the Church."

"You seem venomous about Le Mark," Churchill observed.

"Yes, I dislike him. If his job had fallen to other hands, possibly I should not care so much about calling attention to it. As a practical man I admit that in this country and at this time money is necessary for the conduct of a campaign. Had your friend, Dr. Lawrence, or any gentleman of his character, undertaken to raise a fund, I should have said nothing; but Le Mark! The opportunity to connect him with acts that, however another man might be credited with good motives in their commission, are beyond doubt a great encouragement to immorality, is not to be lost. Dr. Lawrence might sacrifice his preferences for academic virtue to accomplishing an end he believed to be for the public good; Le Mark, on the

other hand, although always harping upon his devotion to the public service, is, as you know, really concerned only for number one."

"I don't see," Churchill put in, "that the character of the act you are talking about depends upon who commits it. The end does not justify the means, nor the motive the crime. If I do anything in this connection, it will not be because I hate Le Mark, but because I hate the thing. I should condemn it equally whoever did it."

"Now you talk like yourself, Russell. I spoke to you about this fund because I know you abominate all uncleanness in politics, and are as willing to oppose it in the camp of your political associates as elsewhere—more so in fact. I shall post you about what is doing, and I only ask that you will follow your conscience."

"Is that all, then, for to-night?" Churchill asked.

"Yes, if you want to go; if you are not in a hurry, I should like to talk to you, since we are at it, about other phases of the political situation."

"Oh, no. I am in no haste; go on."

"You know that Morchester will send three representatives to the next Congress. My political enemies—your friends—mean to capture these three seats, and I think they probably can. Should they succeed, and elect their state and county ticket as well, they will feel strong enough to run any one they like next year for Mayor, and they will take pains to have a city council that will be open to conviction. The Dukes will have the local government in the hollow of the hand, so to speak. Their

plan is to pass a bill leasing to a company—that is to say, to themselves—the water-works. The terms of the lease will be such as to allow, with good management, of immense profits. The amount of money they can make will be enormous. As they already control the street-car service and the gas supply, they will have, if this last scheme succeeds, a grip upon the city that will make them in effect masters.

“Think of what an organisation they can build up with endless places and jobs for political heelers! They will have thousands of men—men out of reach of civil-service rules—distributed systematically through the city, whose bread and butter will depend upon making themselves politically useful, as occasion requires. What was the old machine to such an organisation, ruled not by men liable to defeat at the polls, but by bosses elected by themselves in their capacity as stockholders in the water, gas, and trolley companies?

“This is the Ducal programme, and they already have such a hold upon the old machine that the leaders will be obliged to fall in with their plans. Russell, I would give every dollar I own to get evidence that would incriminate these men. I want you to help me to turn the light on; to expose their plans as fast as I get the facts and the proof. Do you not see what a gang they are? They stop at nothing; they never lose an opportunity. These are the men—are they not—who lied about you in the ‘Clinton,’ when Marshall talked to them? Every day they lunch there together in a pack, like the wolves they are.”



"They are the men," Churchill said, "or at least one of them is the man, and he the least important of the lot. They seem to have been upon your flank, Fergus; you are almost rabid yourself."

The man called Fergus answered gruffly: "I have cause to be. Now you may go if you like, and think these things over."

Churchill found his hat and went out with a curt "Good-night," which was not returned."

The man who sat by the window, apparently wrought to a morose fury by his own talk, was Fergus Frank. He was the son of a successful liquor dealer, a coarse and clever man, who was intelligent enough to know that it was hardly worth while to leave money to his children without giving them opportunity to take a higher social position than his own; yet he made the mistake, from this point of view, of sending Fergus to a Catholic college in Maryland, whence he came instructed, but not accommodated to the world in which his father wished him to live. To correct this error, the young man was sent to Morchester to study law and to make for himself, away from the flavour of the family bar-room, such a place as he could. His sister, after some years at a private day-school, was "finished" at a boarding-school of the kind that has been described as a varnishing shop. Its girls were turned out at the end of a year or two with as shining a surface as dexterity could impart in so short a time to cross-grained material that had known little care in the working.

In time the Frank, of whose origin there was no

record, but whose will is on file in the City Hall, died of pneumonia, leaving besides his son and daughter a paralytic widow, who preferred to remain in New York. Her daughter lived with her.

Fergus stood as much upon his own showing in Morchester as if he had moved thither from another planet. He had failed to make friends; he had succeeded in taking a place at the bar and in making himself in some ways a force to be counted with. He was active in the German and Irish societies; influential with the men who guided the opinions of the poor, as far as they were guided, and he posed as the champion of the wronged as against corporations and the rich. He was by no means of the lawyers who watch for accidents, offer their services for a share of possible damages, and gather what they can by black-mail or misrepresentation, but he was always ready to defend strikers in trouble or to sue for a poor man who could show that he had failed of justice at the hands of the powerful. For such services he took only nominal fees. He also practised in the criminal courts, in cases of importance; for defending a criminal he took all he could get.

Frank had studied the conditions of life in his time and country with care and intelligence; he had come to his own conclusions, and was deeply affected by them. He recognised in the American character, as developed in the United States, an unusual share of the self-reliant venturesome courage that more than anything else has given the English-speaking peoples their peculiar place in the world. He saw

that this courage and an abundant energy were chiefly applied to making money; that money was the principal motive for activity; that with money went many things only attainable in other ways in other countries. He perceived an ignoble quality in wealth that is all or mostly in cash; he recognised a difference between a balance in bank and the land ancestors have called their own, notwithstanding the fact that he doubted the justice of any private ownership of the soil. He knew that houses, furniture, books, objects of art, when they are the expressions of a cultivated taste, constitute wealth that uplifts and educates those who enjoy it. He knew that the people capable of judiciously using wealth of this sort are not commonly those who have a talent for money-making; he saw a lack of adjustment between taste in using and power to acquire; it angered him that the acquirers should show so much cleverness and often so little honesty in their trade. He occupied an entire floor in the spacious old house in which Churchill had visited him. The rooms not used for offices were filled with objects of value, and few of them could be replaced by the simple act of drawing a cheque.

Frank had a passionate attachment for the principles of Democracy, because he considered them based upon pure justice, and he was incensed that a mechanism so well designed should not work more felicitously. The Democratic loom produced a fabric that was substantial and serviceable, perhaps, but it was so rough, so full of knots, so uncouth, unbeautiful, and often so very dirty, that he felt something like

despair as he looked upon it. Some one must be accountable for these disappointing results, and he yearned for the satisfaction of fixing the responsibility and bringing the guilty to punishment. This feeling was heightened by his conviction—attributable partly to inherited ideas prevalent in the class from which he sprang and partly to his own reasoning from what he saw about him—that there did actually exist a sort of unholy compact between the political weavers, and capitalists to defraud the public.

He had come to have a fanatical hatred for immoral money-making, for the men who for the sake of money betray the hope of the masses either by buying or selling judgment. Democracy was his dear foster-mother; he saw her sold to the lewd in the market-place. He was cleverer in a business sense than Churchill, more steadfast of purpose. He meant to make use of the idle man, if the labour of managing him did not come to more than the services wanted were worth.

## Chapter XV

### MARSHALL DISCOVERS AN ENEMY AT HIS CLUB AND OBTAINS RELIEF FROM A MONEY-LENDER

It is almost as difficult nowadays to quarrel with dignity as to believe that honesty receives its recompense here below.

RUSSELL CHURCHILL was the son of gentle, plain people, who had not got on in the world—easy-going souls, never in the running for the gold plate for which the modern man competes so fiercely. Such folk are commonly looked upon with suspicion by testators. The young man's maternal grandfather, knowing, as he thought, too much of the boy's parents to entrust them with money, left what he had to his grandchild, of whom he knew next to nothing. This was a sum sufficient to stifle the incentive of need, but insufficient to found a family. Churchill grew up too much his own master to learn to be master of anything, even of himself. He left the little place in which he was born to go to the College of Morchester, and he never went home again to live. After he was graduated, he travelled, and then drifted back to his college town to play with considerable matters, and now and then to occupy himself quite closely with matters by no means important. He was irregular as to his meals, grossly

idle and spasmodically energetic—altogether a clever, ill-disciplined person, harassed by a conscience, and handicapped by a feeble will. He liked Marshall for many reasons, among others for a certain steadiness of character that he was honest enough to recognise as a thing lacking in his own make-up, for the man saw himself very much as he was.

Churchill had not been long at home before he arranged with Marshall for a dinner at the club, that they might have an opportunity for a talk. They dined, the evening being warm, in the roof garden. Churchill had been talking enthusiastically of the attractions of Cape Ann and answering Marshall's questions about the Lawrences. It suddenly came to him that he had not mentioned Emily and he added:

"I should have seen more of your sister if she had not been with Mrs. Netherby for a week. I rode over there one day to call, but they were off somewhere with McLean."

Marshall asked, "Do you know how Mrs. Netherby came to ask Emily to stay with her? It was an odd thing for her to do."

"Do you think so?" Churchill replied. "Why not? She met Emily at Miss Ellerton's, took a fancy to her, and asked her for a visit. What more natural?"

Marshall said he was not one of Mrs. Netherby's intimates, but he did not think of her as a specially ingenuous person. He had supposed that she usually had a motive in going out of her way. He wanted to know if McLean had been staying in Mrs. Nether-

by's house. Churchill did not positively know, but he was almost sure that McLean had been at the Masconomo.

"Hanging around Mrs. Netherby?" Marshall suggested.

"Not so much Mrs. Netherby this time, I fancy, as your sister."

"My sister! Emily is a child; she has never formally come out."

Churchill smiled. "Younger sisters are children to elder brothers after they are quite grown up for the rest of the world."

"You are not serious? You do not mean that McLean seemed to be seeking Emily?"

"I know very little about it as a matter of fact, but I will tell you what I do know, because you are your sister's natural guardian and ought to look out for her as much as you can."

"Go on," Marshall said.

Churchill resumed. "I happened into the Lawrences' sitting-room one morning and came upon Mrs. Lawrence and Miss Thomas. They both seemed a little disturbed. Miss Thomas had in her hand a letter; I recognised Mrs. Netherby's handwriting; and I heard Mrs. Lawrence say: 'McLean is not likely to come among us; do nothing.' Evidently I had appeared inopportunately, and I should hardly have felt at liberty to tell you this, if Mrs. Lawrence had not said to me later in the day: 'Miss Thomas says Mr. McLean has been in Manchester and appears to have been very much taken with Emily Marshall. He is not a very trustworthy person, is

he?' Whether she meant me to tell you or not I do not know. At all events, I have done so."

"That is all you know?" Marshall inquired, with a shade of sternness in his voice.

"Yes, except that a Mrs. Reeve asked me at the club one day about McLean, and a little later spoke of your sister as being such an attractive girl. She did not connect their names. There was only a hint of some sort of association. I am sorry if this worries you, old fellow. I don't think it possible that there is any occasion for concern, but you may as well know anything that may be of use to you."

"Much obliged," Marshall said calmly. "What has become of McLean?"

"I don't know where he went from Manchester; he is at the other end of the roof at this moment."

Marshall said he hoped he would stay there. This hope was vain, however, for almost immediately, as if divining that he had been a subject of conversation, McLean came towards them in the wake of a man named Somers, who greeted them rather boisterously, and with "You know Mr. McLean, Marshall," pulled up a chair and boarded Churchill.

Marshall rose deliberately; he did know McLean as men know each other to say "How are you?" without getting further for years. McLean held out his hand, and Marshall took it in a grip that, though not cordial, was firm enough to make McLean wince. The two men looked each other in the eye for an instant; McLean smiled, and they sat down.

The State senator was by no means a man of abandoned life; that is to say, he was not the slave of



bad habits; on the contrary, he held himself well in hand, but he had few of the principles that have received the sanction of moralists, and he did not live in a society that imposed the restraints that sometimes serve to keep an unmoral man in the paths of rectitude. He was a politician of base methods, in a community that looked upon protesters against such methods as shabby fellows in search of notoriety. He was eager for money, among people who regarded with suspicion any one who did not think it cheap in exchange for one's life's blood—people with an insatiable appetite for it, sharpened by the teaching that no one need despair of getting it, if only he try hard enough. Yet, in this community, so careless of decency in public affairs, so tolerant of covert larcenies, there existed a prejudice against marrying for money. It was not a pleasant thought that a girl should do so; that a man should resort to so simple and easy a means of coming by what other men worked like devils to get seemed little better than malingering—shamming a love-sickness to escape service.

McLean was rather a hero in Morchester from the simple fact that as a society man he had gone into politics, not daintily, with care to keep clean hands, but ready always to do his share of dirty work. The glory attaching to this gallant conduct—a glory that had never waxed on account of actual public services—had been lately dimmed, as by a breath, by the whisper that the senator was looking to a marriage for money to bolster an undermined fortune. In some way Marshall had heard as much, and although he could hardly entertain the idea that McLean had

a serious purpose in respect to Emily, he felt that a man who had acquired the reputation of a fortune-hunter was poor company for his sister, or for any one for that matter.

McLean said: "I am not long from Manchester, where I had the pleasure of meeting Miss Marshall."

Theodore was quietly interrogative, "Yes?"

"Do you know that country?" McLean went on. "It is one of the greatest places I have seen,—beautiful woods going right down to the rocks on the shore, little beaches, fine roads, handsome properties, not crowded together but with plenty of land; the people are nice; it's a great place; there's nothing like it any nearer; I want a few acres there one of these days."

"Where were you staying?" Marshall asked.

"At the hotel in Manchester, the Masconomo, and at the country club—the 'Essex County,' you know."

"How far away is Mrs. Netherby's cottage?"

"I can hardly say; not far."

The conversation between Marshall and McLean seemed to languish. Somers cut in:

"I thought you were going to Bar Harbour, old man. What kept you at Manchester? You got no farther, did you?"

"No, I found Manchester good 'enough for me."

Somers turned to Churchill. "You've been up that way, too, have n't you?"

Churchill nodded. Somers tried again.

"I say, McLean, how is Le Mark getting on with his campaign fund? Are people coming in, as you expected?"

"The campaign fund," answered McLean, "is in great shape. Le Mark nominates the amount, and generally it is paid. People are badly frightened and they step right up to the mark; and, by the way, I might say that Le Mark steps right up to them. Has he overlooked you, Mr. Marshall?"

"No. Mr. Le Mark was good enough to call upon me yesterday."

"How much did he strike you for?" put in Somers.

"He asked me for a thousand dollars."

No one spoke for a minute. Then Marshall added: "That there may be no misunderstanding, I may as well say that he did not get a cent."

"What!" cried Somers, "you turned the thing down altogether, and you a manufacturer with a mill to run! Where will you be with free silver?"

"Possibly Mr. Marshall prefers a silver standard," McLean remarked.

"No," Marshall said, "I am unequivocally for a gold standard. Are you, senator, or do you prefer 'the parity of the metals' or some similar locution that is not unequivocal?"

McLean was not disturbed; he answered without hesitation: "You will find my position carefully stated in the platform of the Republican party. I have the opinions of my party, and I support the party. To venture another guess, perhaps Mr. Marshall is not a Republican."

"You are wrong again. According to the rules of the party I am entitled to membership, but in some things I do not support it; and I do not expect it to

support me, which is not Republican doctrine as I understand it."

"Did Le Mark ask you for a thousand dollars?" asked Churchill.

"He did."

"And you refused to give him anything?"

"I did."

"May I ask why?"

"You may, and I shall answer as I answered Mr. Le Mark: 'I really cannot see my way to do it, and I do not think it necessary to state my reasons for refusing.'"

"That was all Le Mark got from you?"

"It was."

"I suppose, Marshall," Somers interjected at this point, "that you will not refuse to participate in the good things to come in case the Republicans win—protection and sound money?"

"I expect to vote for both."

Somers returned to the attack. "Votes are cheap," he said.

"So I am told, but I am not in the market," Marshall replied, and would have let the discussion end, but Churchill could contain himself no longer.

"I suggest that Marshall objects to contributing to a corruption fund. Possibly there are still extant men, even manufacturers, who mix principles with their politics."

McLean laughed. "Yes," he said, "the word 'principle' is still current, but it is closely associated with interest. When a man pays interest on his principal he is in a different position from another whose prin-

cial is a source of revenue. This idea has a lodgment in the head of the Western farmer and it doubtless influences his politics.

Marshall's face hardened. "It is known, I believe, to McLean and to you two that I am a debtor. Be kind enough to tell me," turning to McLean, "whether you meant, in what you just said, to be offensive to me in a roundabout way or to question the sincerity of my position upon the money issue."

McLean shrugged his shoulders, threw his head back, and let the smoke curl slowly through his lips, which were fixed in a slightly mocking smile. If he intended to answer he was too long about it.

Marshall stood up. Without raising his voice he said: "Will you come into the street where I shall be at liberty to pound you?"

"I am obliged to decline your invitation," McLean answered, with an affectation of amusement.

"Then be kind enough to take yourself off. You are not wanted here."

"I am quite within my rights, I believe, anywhere on this roof."

"I believe you are, but it may as well be noted that you force yourself upon people who do not find you agreeable; you take advantage of a place that protects your skin to insult a man who anywhere else would knock you down, and you appear to be afraid to go into the street. I believe you have the reputation of being a parasite, a tricky politician of a small kind, a tuft-hunter, a loafer, and a loose liver, but it is my fortune to stamp you as personally timid. Is my language parliamentary, Churchill?"

McLean had grown white; his lips and hands trembled; he tried in vain to keep a steady eye upon Marshall. Suddenly, with an oath, he sprang at the man who had said these intolerable things and tried to strike. Churchill and Somers interfered; in a moment other men had come up. McLean was not allowed to say anything more; he was dragged away, and had a chance to tell his own version of the affair—with appeals to Somers—to the attentive ears of a dozen cronies. McLean was popular and well known at the club. Marshall went there but rarely. McLean had every advantage in trying to put a good face upon the matter, but Somers, being after a fashion a man, and sticking pretty closely to the truth, the senator could not manage to escape discredit. It came to him gradually that he had been hurt in a way that never would heal. Nor did the two friends escape. Churchill was not popular, and more than ever from that day other men avoided him; they spoke to him, but he was not welcome in the little groups at the windows or round a café table.

Marshall was little at the club, so he was something of an outsider always, yet he was essentially so much a man that he was liked, and it was with almost genuine concern that the regular gossips talked of him as one marked by fate for disaster. Nothing definite seemed to be known; it simply came to be understood that he was under the ban of the mighty and sooner or later he would be smashed.

Meanwhile his difficulties were increasing. It was really impossible to get enough orders at any price to keep the mill constantly at work. People were

slow to pay and loath to lend. He was pressed to remit promptly; the banks hesitated to renew his loans; brokers exacted heavy commissions. He would have preferred to give all his time to the direct superintendence of his manufacturing; he was obliged to devote a large part of every day to devising financial shifts. This is the most wearing and the least agreeable of occupations. He chafed under it, and found that the cool freshness of his natural courage was giving place to a feverish anxiety. It was no longer a case of marching steadily up a slope in the face of fire; it was the bewildering scuffle of a street row at quarters too close to permit of dignity. And there are certain natures to whom dignity—meaning to them a certain order in their lives—is essential.

One morning, late in August, Marshall found in his mail a letter from a broker called Brice. It read:

MY DEAR SIR:

I believe that you are at the present time a borrower. I have money to lend, and if you see fit to apply to me I think I can accommodate you upon reasonable terms.

Marshall suspected a trap, but he made an appointment and called on Mr. Brice. This gentleman met him cordially and explained his position with frankness.

"I do not think it worth while to try to conceal from you, Mr. Marshall, that I am acting on behalf of people who have an interest in keeping your business upon its feet. I cannot answer any questions about the identity of the people I refer to, or about the reasons for their interest; that is their business; I

simply state the facts. We believe that you are paying ruinous rates for money; you cannot continue to do so and live. My suggestion is that, as your loans mature, you apply to me, bringing a statement of your liabilities. I have made a careful estimate of the equity in your property over and above the mortgage; I value it at from \$400,000 to \$500,000. If your other liabilities in excess of quick assets do not exceed half this amount, and it is apparent that they are not likely to within a year, we will lend on your own paper at five per cent., making the life of the notes six months. You cannot get into a worse position than at present; you are at liberty to go elsewhere whenever you like. All this is, however, conditional upon your asking no questions. I say it is for our interest that the Marshall Iron and Steel Works should run. What do you say?"

"Do you ask liberty to examine my books?"

"No, sir; we will accept your statement of liabilities, with a voucher from any public accountant you may name. Is my proposal agreeable to you?"

"Quite so. Can you let me have \$23,000 within the next week to take up notes falling due?"

"Yes, sir. But there is one other condition I did not mention; your relations with us, with me as representing my clients, are to be kept quiet; you are not to talk about them."

"I understand. I shall bring you a statement and a note day after to-morrow."

"Any time that suits you, Mr. Marshall."

"Good-morning."

"Good-bye."



This unexpected turn of fortune's wheel puzzled Marshall. He was not sure whether he should have fallen in with Mr. Brice's proposals without more consideration. He was entirely at a loss to understand who could have an interest in sustaining his business; but he failed to detect an immediate danger and the present relief was great. That night he wrote to Emily that about the first of September he would go to her for a week.

## Chapter XVI

### A DINNER ON CAPE ANN.

Happy is he who has lived well enough to get the most out of idling on a summer's day—head in the lap of Nature.

THEODORE MARSHALL wrote to his sister that he expected to spend a week with her, but it may be doubted whether he would have left his business, even for so brief a time, if to be with Emily had not meant seeing Margaret Lawrence; and it must be confessed that he was also sufficiently interested in Mary Ellerton to feel somewhat drawn to Cape Ann by the prospect of seeing her.

A man of sensibility knows that he is blessed in an ideal home; nothing would induce him to incur a serious risk of disturbing the relations out of which it has grown. At the same time he may think with pleasure of another delightful drawing-room, dainty, with softened lights, mysteriously fragrant, that has its peculiar charm; its response to some demand of his nerves. We read of simple souls, and we may think that we know of some—not knowing them very well. Those we know more intimately we find to be surprisingly complex; so much so that, if we stop to think about it, we may well doubt whether the vagaries of our brains would not turn the world at

once into a madhouse, were we not broken to the harness of habit and bitted with conventions. A few people think enough to arrive at principles of conduct; most of us experience self-reproach or self-complacency according as our lives depart from or conform to accepted standards. We are driven as is a blind horse, but because we manage to keep in the road it does not follow that we may not be thinking of fresh pastures snuffed in passing as well as of the crib in the stable.

Marshall went from New York to Boston by night and by noon of the next day he was breathing an air that brightened the eye, gave elasticity to muscles and nerves, and seemed to flush out all the channels of his being, leaving them full of some cool, delicious wine. Before luncheon he tumbled like a porpoise in the stinging sea-water, and, meeting Emily waiting for him on the almost deserted beach, he took her beneath the elbows and lifted her—screaming—so that her skirts flapped in his face.

That afternoon with Emily and Miss Thomas he wandered off to the downs and lay on his back like a lazy Mussulman among his women. They plied him with questions, which he did not answer, and told him everything they wanted to—he listening when he liked, and rudely letting them talk to an inattentive ear when the far sails, somewhere between the clouds and the sea, seemed things too wonderful and too beautiful to admit of any other thought. Was it possible that he had sweated through those stewing, unclean months in a soot-blackened mill in Morchester—through laborious days and

unrestful nights, when all this was to be had for the price of a train ticket?

His women might talk—and their voices were good in his ears,—but let him look at the sweep of the sky line and take far voyages in the wide-winged ships. He thought of the winged words of the Danaan heroes; of the black-beaked, hollow ships of the Achaians that took them far away from their dear native land over the sea's broad back; of seafaring Odysseus, and of his meeting with white-armed Nausicaa; of Cæsar's adventure with pirates; of all the benched and curved ships that of old had plied the mid-sea—from Asia Minor to Cadiz; of Beowulf seeking Hrothgar, over the Swan road, stepping

“Upon the stern, while the stream of ocean  
Whirled the sea against the land”;

of the ship-handly, harrying Danes; of Theodolph the Icelander; of Isolde; of the voyage of *The Rose*; of Treasure Island; of the steely cliffs that bound the ice cap of the southern pole.

Throughout that long idle afternoon his mind went wandering, tasting, and relishing the best of all it had harvested; getting into tune with an orchestra other than that of the mill. At last, as the rose and violet lights began to show on the southern skies, he thought of dinner, and it was surprising how important it seemed of a sudden. He was very hungry and they were to dine with the Lawrences.

On Cape Ann these good people commonly dined in the middle of the day, but on great occasions the hour was later; that evening it was at half-past seven,

that none of the glorious afternoon should be lost. The dinner was to be the event of the season. Mrs. Thane, Miss Ellerton, the Marshalls, and Miss Thomas were to be present; Mrs. Netherby had accepted "to dine and to spend the night."

In an old stone building on a well-known corner in Boston there is a shop where courtesy, good manners, and good taste have been at home for many years—for more than a generation, I should say. If you are a friend of the house, and happen to be in need of anything, you have no occasion to trouble yourself to go to town to get it; you need only write a note, and whether your want is a dozen and a half of Sèvres dinner plates, or wool for golf stockings, it will be attended to with unfailing politeness and good judgment. Mrs. Lawrence was obliged to write a whole letter to recite all the items required to make the dinner-table conform to her plans.

As a rule her family lived with simplicity; only now and then she indulged a weakness for splendor, and dazzled her domestic circle with some Arabian Nights' entertainment. Naturally it gave her more pleasure to do this sort of thing in the wilderness than in a city. She would have preferred asking Mrs. Netherby to a supper of the every-day high-tea variety; but it pleased her to make her husband stare and Edward kick his elder sister under the table. Then, they had had a glorious summer, a free, unconventional, out-of-door life, and she knew that the dinner she meant to give would be received with a zest that would never attend it in town.

The girls were all told to wear their best gowns.

Dr. Lawrence, descending from above, where he had dressed by candle-light, muttered something under his breath that smacked more of an early experience in the army than of his later honours, as he discovered on the hall table a tray with three flowers for buttonholes and three minute envelopes. He learned that he was to take in Mrs. Netherby; that Theodore Marshall was to be honoured by the hostess; and that Edward was put in charge of Mrs. Thane. The last card made the Doctor laugh outright, to the scandal of his wife, who had an eye on him through an open door, although in the act of receiving Mrs. Thane and her niece, who had arrived early. At the same time Mrs. Netherby coughed, by way of announcement, from the head of the stairs, and the Doctor turned to wait for her, with a sudden assumption of gravity and respect.

"Dear me," she said, glancing at the tray, "three men? How many women?"

The Doctor, with an air of deep thoughtfulness, made a mental computation and gave her the result. "Eight, but I have just received a fresh assurance that I am devoted entirely to you; there is not a word said about the lady on my other hand; that leaves a man and a boy to be divided among the other seven."

Mrs. Netherby asked to see the cards. "And be quick," she added, "or we shall be caught. You are wrong; your mathematics are of no use; both the man and the boy are assigned to individual women."

"That seems very unfair; come into my den, Mrs. Netherby, and we will correct my wife's errors."

They took out the cards, and the Doctor placed a chair at his table. "You write, please," he said, "so that a man's hand may not appear; put on Marshall's card, Miss Lawrence, Miss Frances Lawrence, Miss Ellerton. Thank you; now on the lad's, Miss Thomas, Miss Marshall. Allow me." He offered his arm and they went to the drawing-room, dropping the cards on the way.

Margaret and Mary Ellerton were standing together. As soon as she could, Mrs. Netherby sailed up to them and tapped Mary with her fan.

"Good gracious, my dear, you need not be so aggressively handsome; you are a blazing beauty to-night; and yet, and yet, Miss Margaret is a dangerous rival. Upon my word, you two are enough to quench all the women in Morchester. You will not be tolerated if you go about looking in this way next winter. I think some one might have told me I was coming to a ball. *Voilà*, my little friend, and Miss Thomas! Is there to be no one here who is respectably plain—not one to keep me in countenance? Your mother, my dear, is altogether too handsome for her age."

"I shall not forget to tell her, Mrs. Netherby," Margaret said, as she moved away to speak to Emily. A moment later she was shaking hands with Marshall, and for the first time she was conscious that he excited a distinct interest that no other man had ever aroused. This consciousness came again in a swelling wave as presently she saw her friend's face as she spoke to him. If Mrs. Netherby's eye had been upon Mary at that instant, she certainly would have said to herself, "Oh, my!"

The dining-room was of good size; the night was still; the windows were all open and the air was as fresh as at dawn of a June morning in a garden of roses. The round table was fairly gleaming. Mrs. Thane settled herself in her chair on the Doctor's other hand with a long sigh of contentment. The North Shore had suited her, and she looked forward to an hour or so of complete peace with the world. A delicate pink had come to Mrs. Lawrence's cheek as she saw that her party was to be a success; she looked like an exquisite figure in Dresden. Little Fan's eyes were dancing; she clapped her hands furtively for her mother's benefit. Miss Thomas caught her at it and signed to Emily. The Doctor's attention was attracted; he spoke to the child across the table: "I think so, too, Fan."

All eyes turned to Fanny, who flushed to the shades of an American Beauty.

"You see, Mrs. Netherby," the Doctor said maliciously, "we are not used to living daintily in these latitudes. We fare heartily, but it is many weeks since we have dined. Fan, who always knows a great deal that she should not, has reason to believe that she is going to do uncommonly well to-night."

"Four boxes from Boston," Fanny whispered audibly to Mary, who sat on her right; and Edward, who was on the other side, threw his arm over the back of her chair and whispered still louder: "That's right, pud'en head, tell us what was in 'em."

Mrs. Netherby interposed. "My dear, tell him to wait and see. He will have cause for thankfulness if he is patient."



As the dinner progressed, Mrs. Netherby and the Doctor grew almost riotous, Mrs. Netherby apologising at intervals to Fanny for her bad behaviour. Mrs. Thane admonished them from time to time and enjoyed herself thoroughly. Meanwhile, Mrs. Lawrence was questioning Marshall about his summer in town and the progress of his work. He told some of the amusing, some of the interesting things that are always happening in a large works, where happenings are frequent and human nature is studied to advantage. His eyes were always wandering to Margaret, and still he could not be insensible to the fact that the only person of all that party who had seen the works, or knew in the least what a summer there meant, sat by his side. He was really talking to her, to Miss Thomas, to Margaret, and to Mrs. Lawrence. He did not know whether Mary had told of her visit and of the expedition on the river, nor whether it was for him to allude to it.

Mrs. Netherby was not so busy with Dr. Lawrence that she had been unable to spare an ear for what was going on opposite. Suddenly she shot a question at Marshall:

"Do you ever have visitors at your works?"

"Yes, indeed," he answered, "I have had two this summer." He looked to Mary; his eyes said, "Shall I tell?"; hers answered, "Yes, why not?" Margaret saw the interchange and felt it. Of course, it was nothing, but she was beginning to be sensitive where these two were concerned. Marshall continued:

"I have had the honour this summer of receiving Miss Ellerton and Mr. Le Mark."

"What! together?" Mrs. Netherby exclaimed. "That is a combination! Imagine them hand in hand at the gate of Paradise!"

"No, not together," Marshall hastened to assure her as soon as the general laugh permitted. "Miss Ellerton came from the College Settlement on an errand of mercy and Mr. Le Mark, only the other day, came with the pretence that I could help him to save the country."

Mrs. Netherby gave Marshall an approving smile, as much as to say, "Well done, you will do, young man," and turned to Mary.

"How did you like it, dear? Was it interesting?"

Mary opened her eyes and said, "Immensely." She did not know how much Mrs. Netherby knew; it was probably all that Leonora had been told or had discovered. There was no reason why the company should not know that she had been on the water with Marshall, but she did not care to have the announcement made at that moment. Theodore looked at Margaret and felt a culprit that his mind should revert with pleasant insistence to Mary as she sat in the boat that night; that it should move him to an interest he could not forbear to have her beside him then.

Before Churchill left for Morchester he had asked Mary Ellerton if he might write to her, and she had answered in a matter-of-fact way:

"By all means, do; I shall only acknowledge your letters because there is nothing going on here to write about, but I shall like it if you will write to me fully about what is doing there—a news-letter; let me know about business and politics and people. You

are my mentor in Morchester matters, you know; you must not let my knowledge get rusty in this long vacation."

Churchill had written, and, mindful of the attention she had given him when he had talked about Marshall, he had given her a detailed account of the scene on the roof of the club when McLean had been obliged to leave Marshall in possession of the field; he had not said anything about his interview with Fergus Frank. Mary had kept her news to herself, and, as it chanced, she was the only person present who knew of the affair except Mrs. Netherby, who had had only a provokingly obscure hint from her husband that some one had handled McLean roughly at the club.

A week or so earlier Mary had met Mrs. Netherby at the "Essex County"; that lady had touched upon her embarrassments in regard to Emily and the senator. She also confided to Mary that McLean had written that he was coming back. Mrs. Netherby did not know whether this was mere bravado or an indication of a real purpose in his pursuit of Emily. Mary thought that Mrs. Netherby had shown signs of a guilty conscience, and to keep her in order, as well as to see how Emily and Theodore took it, she said:

"It must have made you feel at home in Manchester, Mrs. Netherby, to have Mr. McLean about. I think you might have sent him to call upon us. Did you say he was coming again?"

Emily went a little pale and looked in a slightly scared way first at one and then at the other. Theodore was perfectly calm and waited for Mrs. Netherby

to speak. Madam was annoyed at Mary's introduction of McLean's name, because she knew that her conduct as affecting Emily was open to criticism, and that she was among people most likely to consider it culpable. Nevertheless, she was not a person easily disconcerted. She answered briskly:

"The Honourable Felix is a wretch; he wrote to me that he might come. I told him we had seen enough of him; he wrote that he would come this week, and yesterday I had a note saying it was impossible for him to get away. I am afraid he is a sad dog. I have heard a rumour that he was in some sort of a fracas at the club last week. Do you know anything about it, Mr. Marshall? You are just from the front."

As Marshall looked up, Mary caught his eye; her eyes opened in their deliberate way, implying—what? It was hard to tell, but he knew without doubt that she had heard of his part in the quarrel. Margaret, who appeared to be hardly listening, saw all that passed; that there was an understanding between them; that the young man was embarrassed. He said:

"There was some sort of a row, Mrs. Netherby; as I understand, it came of a foolish discussion about politics. I do not think it amounted to much—mere words; there were no blows as far as I know."

"Who was the other man?" rather sharply, from Mrs. Netherby.

"I am sorry, Mrs. Netherby, that I can't tell you. I am a member of the club, and we like to hush up these silly affairs in the family circle. I will say this much: it was a man you hardly know, I believe."

Marshall was conscious that his neighbour's foot was tapping the rug under the table, and he could not help turning a trifle to see her face; it was demure, with a ghost of a smile at the corners of the mouth and a good deal of light in the eyes.

Poor Margaret was bewildered; she felt very much out of it.

Mrs. Netherby turned to the Doctor: "Why cannot people let politics alone?"

"I had the impression," the Doctor answered, "that with the exception of a somewhat piratical crew for the ship of state people did leave politics alone—so much so that people may be surprised some day to discover whither the ship is bound. However, as it is decidedly bad manners to talk politics we will not begin."

"Thank you; will one of you gentlemen suggest a topic of conversation? Mr. Marshall tells me I must not ask impertinent questions. Dr. Lawrence says, 'For manners' sake kindly drop the matter you last touched upon.'"

Mrs. Lawrence said: "I suggest that we leave these rude persons to their cigars and go where we can tell each other all we know without restraint."

## Chapter XVII

### THE WEST PARISH ROAD

Work and love are the meat for a full stature.

FOR two or three days after Mrs. Lawrence's dinner Mary Ellerton was restless and depressed. Her knowledge about Theodore Marshall's "life and works"—for the summer—had put her temporarily in a position of advantage, but when the hours passed without seeing him, and she felt that he was constantly at the Lawrences, and knew that he had also interfered with her enjoyment of Miss Thomas,—because, as it happened, Miss Thomas did not come to see her,—she became weary and impatient.

At no other time in the summer would she have hesitated to go to the Lawrences, or to Emily's rooms, upon the slightest intimation that she must entertain at home her blue devil, for she had such a follower who turned up now and then—a truculent and tiresome visitor. Alas! he had arrived, taken possession of the house, and was at her elbow all day. Yet she would not flee to friends among whom he never followed, because—because—she hardly knew why. So she moped a good deal, reading heavy books and taking the world seriously.

Meanwhile, Emily's contingent and the Lawrences

were passing back and forth at all hours, Theodore manœuvring for opportunities to see Margaret and for a chance to have her to himself for at least an afternoon. He knew it would not do to baldly propose that they should go off together apart from their families. Every one was always so ready to go anywhere that to take her away alone it would be necessary to rudely warn off the others. It was out of the question to expect peace within call of the family voices; some one was always wanting Margaret, and it would never occur to any of the Lawrences that he had any peculiar claims upon her.

But whoever greatly desires an opportunity and will play the spider for its sake, will generally get the desired chance by alertness at the proper time. Theodore learned that the Doctor and Mrs. Lawrence had decided upon a day to pay a visit in Cambridge; this meant an expedition lasting from breakfast to supper time. Now it so happened that Emily wanted a fox terrier puppy, but hesitated to pick out the animal for herself. She had proposed that Theodore should go to the kennels beyond Essex and choose her a dog. All this Theodore confided to Edward, and, explaining how ignorant he was himself as to the points of terriers, asked the young man to give them the benefit of his knowledge. Edward was flattered and promised to ride over to the kennels the next afternoon, the day his father and mother were to go to Cambridge. Then Theodore represented to Margaret that he had not seen some of the places he heard most talked of; he asked if she would go with a small party arranged particularly to introduce him to the country

—the morrow being a good time because the Doctor and Mrs. Lawrence would not be at home.

Without much reflection Margaret agreed to the plan and even consented to a leisurely bicycle expedition—the hills to be walked and many stops made in pleasant places; a little luncheon was to be taken along; the start was to be made in the middle of the morning. But when it came to making up the party there did not seem to be many available persons. Edward was willing that the others should ride with him, if they liked, as far as they went his way; he had important business at a distance that must be seen to. Miss Thomas did not ride; Emily was not fond of a bicycle outside of a rink; there really was no one left except Fanny and Miss Ellerton. Theodore was delighted to take Fanny, and when the question arose whether she was equal to so much riding, he promised to tow her over all difficulties so that she would have no chance for fatigue. In the case of Miss Ellerton he made a stand.

“By all means ask her if you wish; but you know we do not quite agree about her. If you would not mind going with only Fan and me, I should enjoy it more. I am a very hard-working man and my vacation is short; why not let me have my own way—for once?”

Margaret hesitated, owing to the fact that she had never in her life been quite so near to a deliberate pairing off with a man. She was puzzled, too, about Mary; she recalled her strong impression of the night of the dinner that Mary and Marshall both had knowledge of things unknown to the rest of the table. She



was sure that they had seen a good deal of each other, and she could not at all understand why Marshall did not like Mary. In fact, Margaret could not believe that he did not; then why take such an attitude towards her?

However, Margaret consented, and the hour of starting was set for eleven o'clock. They went by the West Parish road, and Edward went with them to West Gloucester, where they left the direct route for Essex to go, first, a little way towards Coffin's Beach and then to the left through the willows.

Half-way to Essex the West Parish road approaches the water to within the width of a field. To the north-east of a rough meadow is a little promontory prettily wooded, and from the slope of the mast-covered bank that dips to the inlet one looks across a blue bight to a long tongue of creamy yellow sand, and beyond to the open sea. To the right are dunes too beautiful in curves and shades to be nothing more than drifted sand; to the left lie alternate blue pools of clear sea-water and rocks jutting up from the beach.

The view to seaward is towards the north, over a stretch of water where sails are rare. Twenty miles away are the Isles of Shoals, and the New Hampshire coast is dimly seen far to the west. It is a shore that even in mid-summer, when on certain days it has extraordinary beauty, suggests the terrible loneliness of winter nights on seas no vessels traverse except by accident. The ship ribs on the beaches north of Cape Ann tell their story of Maine schooners trying to round the cape and driven by easterly

winds onto shoals, where in heavy weather the surf breaks furlongs from the shore.

Under the pines of the headland, Margaret, Fanny, and Marshall sat down to lunch and to take in at leisure the influences of the place. Fanny said:

"Madge, dear, it looks like a perfectly new world that never had anything happen to it."

Marshall brought water from a farm well and luncheon was eaten as they talked, Fanny hovering over the pools at the foot of the slope, full of fascinating creatures she could not ignore.

There was one moment when, if Margaret had looked towards him, she would have seen in Theodore's eyes all he longed to tell her. She did not, and he pulled himself together, believing that the time had not yet come; that he had no right to speak until his future was more assured. She broke the silence:

"I don't understand why you are so disagreeable about Mary Ellerton. I think she is such a dear, and I had an idea you were becoming friends."

"I, too, think she is charming, and we are good friends, but I believe I explained to you once before that as between you and her I am quite indifferent to Miss Ellerton."

Theodore said this with quiet assurance, as if it was the most matter-of-fact statement in the world. He went on:

"She came to the works one night in July on an errand for the College Settlement—or rather she was there in her capacity of a Settlement resident. I rowed her a little way out to give her a bit of air, and landed her at the foot of Rogers Street. Then we

met several times at the house of one of my men in whom she had become interested."

Theodore told about Nansen and Margaret listened attentively. She said:

"But that is not in the least the sort of relation that is traditional as between master and man."

"Not in the least," he repeated, "but the people who establish the tradition are in great part writers and platform talkers who know little of the matter; those who do know something of what goes on in factories are not often persons who have the ear of the public; moreover, factories differ as much as people."

"I wish you would tell me more," Margaret said, looking up after a pause.

"I shall be glad to, and I can in very few words. The manager is on a small scale a ruler, a chief; his success depends in great measure upon his influence with his men. His own conduct is closely scrutinised, and it is quite within his power to create an atmosphere of mutual confidence, of trust, in which honesty, justice, and industry flourish; or he can make his works an abominable place, full of suspicion, hatred, petty tyranny, and deceit. The manager lives with his folk, and, by deed and direct personal contact, he can exert a really considerable influence, if he is clever enough and wants to."

Margaret said she had always supposed that manufacturing usually involved an endless struggle between masters and men, who kept the peace only when both were armed and very much afraid of each other.

"Sometimes," Theodore admitted, "it is so, and then trouble is sure to come; but enlightened managers have discovered that their own interests lie in making their men comfortable and in establishing with them relations of confidence. And they can do it, as I said before, provided they will take the necessary trouble.

"You must not think," he went on, "that I am trying too much to exalt my occupation. I am only exhibiting a common human weakness. Any one grows to think of the task he puts his heart into as particularly worth while. And you may have noticed that every man who has an exacting calling thinks that his particular duties are more taxing than those that fall to men of any other class. He thinks so, if he does not talk about it; his wife invariably thinks so and never fails to talk about it. I suspect that what Miss Ellerton means by 'brains and heart' applied in any direction never fail to keep a body busy. I doubt if I should have chosen to be a manufacturer if I had been quite free to choose; but I am in it and in very deep, and, as your father says, it does not make so much difference what you do as whether you do it as well as you know how.

"I will say this, and to be able to say it is worth all the work I have ever done: I have seen more genuine helpfulness, one to another, more manliness, more character, more courage, and fidelity in plain wage-earners than I have in any other class."

"How do you account for that?" Margaret asked.

Theodore reflected before answering. "Partly," he said, "because I have seen them under circumstances

that called for virtue, and partly because the great virtues, like great poetry, are commonest among elemental men. Production comes before criticism, action before introspection, simplicity before complexity, power before nerves. If you happen to know of the seven deadly sins, you will see that they are rather incompatible with ten hours a day of hard labour, and twelve dollars a week for the support of a family.

"I have told you of an instance of mute fidelity; of a man dying silently at his post without a thought of doing anything out of the common. Another of my men crawled into a closed engine-room to shut a stop valve when the engine was racing—the governor belt off—so that the building was shaking to loosen the mortar from the bricks. The exhaust pipe was broken and the place was full of steam. He could not see, and he could not live there for five minutes. He felt his way to the engine, his mouth to the floor, and found and shut the throttle valve before he was boiled alive. I got to the door of the room as the engine stopped. When I opened the door the steam swept me back as if it were flame, and out of it came a red-faced man with red hands, swearing hard under his breath, but quite unconscious of heroism.

"There is a story of the bravest man in Russia. He was a lieutenant of artillery. The shells of his battery were ineffective. A superior officer rode up and cursed him for not having the range. The lieutenant said the fuses were bad. His chief retorted that this statement was merely an excuse. The young man took a shell at random, lit the fuse, and

held the shell in his arms until the fuse burned down and sputtered out. It was a boy's bravado compared to the act of my fellow who shut the valve."

This story had drawn Fanny from her anemones. She stood listening with wide eyes. "Did the superior officer stay with the lieutenant?" she asked, "or did he scramble out of the way?"

"I don't know, Fan, I suspect he got behind his horse. But we did not come here to talk about the mill. I am ashamed of myself. Do you want me to catch any of the animals in your pools?"

"No, thank you, they would die, you know, and I like to see them enjoying themselves at home."

There was little said for a few minutes and Fanny wandered off.

Theodore took up the conversation again:

"I have a feeling that you have not much sympathy for such work as mine, and I want you to see that it is not necessarily ignoble. I very much wish you to think well of me, and my excuse for talking so much about the mill is a desire that you may understand better what I am trying to do. There is nothing I would not wish to do to get your good opinion, but as I must stick to the mill, please think as well of it as possible."

"I should not think," Margaret answered, "that my opinion would be of much value upon a matter I know so little about."

"I have not succeeded in giving you any ideas?"

"I won't say that, but you cannot expect me to learn too fast. When you talk about your work I feel horribly ignorant, and I have to hark back to

my prejudices to save me from the sensation of having been improperly brought up."

"If I am very moderate in my doses of instruction, do you think you may in time become interested in the matter?"

Margaret looked up and asked: "In what matter?"

Theodore was deliberate in answering, but when he spoke he was concise and direct: "In the mill and its master."

"Of course," Margaret answered. "We are too good friends that I should not care about all you do. I really am interested, but I am afraid I have the pagan love for beauty at any price, for external, sensible beauty; that I shall need a good deal of teaching to make me a modern woman with a taste for problems; you seem to be in the thick of them."

Theodore smiled. "So I am, or was last week, and possibly it is because you are somewhat removed, as it were, from the commoner affairs of life that you seem to me a divinity."

Margaret laughed lightly. "You would not think so if you knew me better," she said, and then, leaning back a little against the tree at whose foot she sat, she added: "Do you know a little poem called *Losses*, by Frances Brown?"

"Yes."

"But when their tales were done,  
There spake among them one,  
A stranger, seeming from all sorrow free:  
'Sad losses ye have met,  
But mine is heavier yet,  
For a believing heart is gone from me.'"

As she finished she drew a long breath and looked steadily seaward a moment before she said:

"That is what I dread,—the loss of a believing heart. It is so simple to believe; there are such mazes to follow in questioning. I am afraid I have had too much happiness, that I am a coward about facing the miseries of others. What right have I to all I have unless it is a gift from the hand of One whose justice is indubitable? I am at peace with the world; it is full of beauty for me; why should I busy myself investigating its defects? You spoke of the deadly sins. I cannot accuse myself of any of them unless it be sloth. Do you think I can be convicted on that count?"

"No," Marshall answered, "in Heaven's name do not be in any way other than you are. I doubt if we need go seeking for duties. I fancy they are revealed quite as fast as we are able to attend to them, and I believe that your spiritual health is extremely good. In fact, it seems to me that such contentment as yours is a much-neglected duty. I will go further and say that I believe your happiness is the state to which we are all called, a state that is a possibility for all, one that is missed so generally because so many of us are defective. It is the goal of humanity, as far as this life is concerned. Many miss it undoubtedly on account of other people's perversities, but a greater number are unhappy on account of their own avoidable sins than a curious generation, searching for remote causes, is apt to believe."

And so they talked until late into the mellow afternoon, not as lovers, apparent or presumptive,—they were too near to a crisis, which could not be permitted



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to occur at that time, to hazard a revealing phrase or even to venture upon gallantry or coquetry,—but as intimates, learning to know each other and coming to many understandings. At last they rode slowly home, conscious of an autumnal prophecy in the air, and of another prophecy chanted to hearts that answered in all devoutness.

## Chapter XVIII

### BAD MEN, BATTLE, AND MYSTERY

It is said that a man of character is one whose conduct can be predicted; but the gift of this prophecy is not for persons without character.

WHEN he left Margaret Lawrence, Marshall rode slowly towards Emily's rooms. The world seemed to him a better place, better worth while, than ever before in his life. As he turned the corner of the house he saw Emily and Miss Thomas upon the piazza, and near Emily, bending towards her, McLean. Miss Thomas was the first to see Theodore, and they perfectly understood each other at a glance. She knew that relief had certainly come; he read her signal to be careful.

Theodore went directly to Emily, who appeared for the moment to have lost her wits; he took her hand and put one arm around her as she looked up, scared and uncertain, into his face. She started to ask him if he knew Mr. McLean. He interrupted her gently:

"Yes, dear, I know Mr. McLean. I think he came to see me. We have business together. Miss Thomas, will you take Emily in? Mr. McLean will excuse you both, I don't doubt."

Emily was too frightened to demur. She scarcely spoke to her visitor, but went quietly into the house.

Marshall took a chair and looked at McLean as if ready to hear anything he had to say.

The politician stood with his back to the piazza rail, smiling as though at a somewhat theatrical exhibition of virtue. Theodore neither smiled nor spoke. McLean lit a cigarette and finally said:

"I found it difficult to get away, but when I learned that you were here I could not help running on. I want you to get over the idea that I am afraid of you. There is a difference between going with malice aforethought into the street to brawl, and meeting a man who threatens at a time when it suits one's convenience."

"Look here, McLean," Theodore answered, "don't be any more of a blackguard than is necessary. It's a poor game for a man of your sort to try his hand on so young and inexperienced a girl as my sister. You know I do not want a row here, and you ought to be enough of a gentleman not to wish to bring a woman into our quarrels."

"I came to see Miss Marshall," McLean said lightly, "not you."

"I thought the fact of my being here decided you to come?"

"It was not the motive precisely, but it added a zest that helped me to make up my mind."

"Well, as you are here, how would you like to go to some quiet place where we can see which is the better man? Or do you choose to take refuge under cover of a woman's reputation? I shall not fight you here, if I can help it, for my sister's sake. I am willing, happy, to go anywhere else and thrash you to your heart's content."

McLean smiled disagreeably. "The places at which we meet never seem to suit you."

Marshall made no answer. McLean moved forward and flipped his knuckles across Theodore's cheek. "Take that, my man!" he said, and stepped quickly back to be ready for defence.

The younger man did not move; his eyes were hard, and blood filled the veins of his neck and showed upon the struck cheek; but he sat like a stone, looking at something across the road. At that moment a station waggon drove up. McLean looked curiously at Marshall for a moment. "Good-evening," he said coldly, and climbed into the waggon.

Marshall, as a man walks in sleep, went to his bicycle, mounted, and followed. He saw McLean examine a time-table, then speak to the driver. Presently the waggon turned off from the road to the station and pulled up at Miss Ellerton's door. Marshall arrived in time to hear McLean ask if they would give him some supper if he waited over for a later train. Mrs. Thane failed to see anything out of common in the situation and answered with a conventional phrase. Mary was gracious if scarcely cordial. She turned almost abruptly to Theodore. He was now pale, but in perfect control of himself. "And will you do as much for me?" he said.

"I will, indeed," Mary answered.

Marshall was still in his bicycle clothes and dusty from a day on the road, but he seemed quite unconscious of the fact and sat down without apology to talk to Mrs. Thane. McLean was excited and in great force. He talked to Mary so cleverly and with so

much of the gaiety of a boy on a holiday that she could not have helped admiring his "go," if she had not read the secret of the situation and felt the nervous tension that made the man so voluble. Every now and then her attention wandered as she caught Theodore's low, even tones. He was talking well and steadily to her aunt, discovering that lady's interests and giving her the benefit of his own thinking about matters that she had looked at from other points of view. Mrs. Thane was delighted with his grave absorption in their conversation, and when they all went in for supper she saw nothing extraordinary in the continuance, throughout the meal, of the pairing off that had begun at once upon the piazza.

There Mary and McLean went again after leaving the dining-room. A half-hour passed; a carriage was heard outside; Theodore rose to go. Mrs. Thane thought he left her almost abruptly. At the door Marshall met Mary; she did not move to let him pass, but began to talk, trying to detain him. He said, "I must go." Mary put her hand upon his arm and looked straight into his eyes. He was not a dull man; he read a great deal in her straightforward gaze—a wistful concern; doubt as to what she ought to do, interest, and something not unlike tenderness. He dropped his head and without a word passed out, letting her hand fall from his sleeve.

In a few moments he had caught up with the waggon and was following it along the dark, wooded road, through the village, into the dark again to the station. He did not accost McLean there, but swung himself onto the train after he had seen his man aboard. They

both got out at Manchester. There was no cab waiting; after a moment's hesitation McLean crossed the track and started along the road to the Masconomo House.

There is a dark stretch, between the crossing and the high ground to the south-east, where there are no houses. It was here that McLean had to face the man he had struck. He turned and raised his hand. He shouted, "Keep back, or I will shoot you like a dog!"

Theodore never talked afterwards of what followed, but if he had, he could not have told whether McLean had or had not a pistol; certainly no shot was fired. Marshall only knew at the time that McLean was in his hands, and when he had done with him he felt deadly sick at the thought of a man so beaten. He dragged his victim to the side of the road and left him. Two or three hours later, after Marshall had tramped back, seen Miss Thomas, and had a bath, he went to bed and in ten minutes was fast asleep. He had had a full day.

McLean did not go to the Masconomo that night. He went to Beverly, and he stayed there in a room in a roadside hotel for ten days that he could ill afford to waste.

For a half-hour after Theodore left him this too valiant person lay in a heap, indisposed to move. He was roused by the sound of hoofs on the macadam. He got to his feet and hailed the driver of a dog-cart, who was alone and probably on his way home from a dinner. As the light from one of the carriage lamps fell upon McLean the man in the trap pulled up.

"Hullo! What's the matter with you?"

"Well, I'm not drunk," McLean hastened to explain, "but I have been a good deal knocked about."

"I should say so; stand into the light a bit; how'd it happen? Tramps?"

"No; a personal difference with an acquaintance; a gentleman's quarrel; least said about it the better—for good reasons."

"Same old reason, I suppose. Gehenna! but your friend must have been an earnest man! What can I do for you? Where do you want to go?"

"Anywhere out of the way. Do you know of a country hotel where there are no summer visitors? My traps are at the Masconomo; my name is McLean. Help me to keep this damned thing quiet, and some one may do as much for you, if you ever find yourself in a hole."

"How about your friend?"

"He won't talk, damn him forever! he's satisfied."

"There's a place at Beverly that might serve your turn."

"Will you drive me down? Look here—you may as well do one of two things: leave me to blunder into more trouble and tell all you know at the club tomorrow; or go up to the Masconomo, pay my bill, bundle up my things, and take me to Beverly. Be a good fellow; possibly you'll need a Samaritan yourself before you know it. What do you say?"

"Why, thieves should stand together, of course; they know me at the hotel; I'll be back in twenty minutes."

"Good man! Here's money; don't overlook my flask. I am suffering for a drink."

This was how McLean had the luck to keep a knowledge of his thrashing from a circle of friends that would have been deeply interested in hearing all about it.

After her visitors had left her that evening, Miss Ellerton was strongly impressed with the disabilities of women. She would have given much to have felt at liberty to follow the warriors under almost any pretext; she was horribly curious as to what was happening, but, if the truth be told, not very much alarmed. It did not occur to her that McLean might use a deadly weapon, nor that Marshall, in whom her interest centred, would prove unable to take care of himself. She admired the audacity of the senator and the evident determination of Theodore to bring about a reckoning. What a pity that she could not do such things herself, or even see the meeting, or go to Emily's and wait for news! She could not do the latter because it seemed intrusive. So she went to her room and sat there until very late before undressing; finally she had to go to bed without a ray of enlightenment.

Meanwhile there was tragedy with Emily. Theodore's entrance upon a scene set for McLean and herself—Miss Thomas did not count except that, in a way, she was a comfort—was most disquieting. She did not like the aspect of her flirtation as it would appear in the light of her brother's questions. She did not like herself as she would look to him, and it began to dawn upon her that McLean's quarrel at the club might have been with Theodore—possibly about her. When she found that the two men had gone off; when two



hours had passed without word from either, poor little Emily was in a pitiable state of mind. Miss Thomas found her heart more open to wisdom and instruction than it had been for many a day.

Emily had refused to go to the hotel for supper and was lying down; Miss Thomas sat beside her.

"Why does n't Theodore come back?" Emily asked piteously. "Do you suppose he went off with Mr. McLean?"

"Yes, I think he did. And, my dear, I hope that if Theodore has anything to say to you about Mr. McLean you will listen to him. I have never met Mr. McLean before, but I recognise in him a type of men that never bring happiness to women. Shall I tell you a story the facts of which are within my own knowledge?"

Emily pressed the hand that had quietly taken hers a moment before.

"There was a young girl who lived in a pretty Massachusetts town where people from larger places came for summer holidays. She was an eager girl, full of zest for all life had to offer, and a little impatient that it did not offer more. One summer there came with a party of gay people a man who flattered the country girl by singling her out for attentions such as she had imagined but never received. He was a man who had seen so much and seemed to know the world so well; he was so ready, so clever and assured, that he dazzled and bewildered the inexperienced girl. She was not without misgivings. She thought the man touched sacred things irreverently, and she was not always sure that he was what he appeared to be.

"But little by little her distrust accommodated itself to her vanity and she began to think of him as superior to her own narrow conceptions of right and wrong; as belonging to a world whose standards she was too ignorant to judge without prejudice. This man, who was really ignoble by nature and corrupted by an ignoble life, made love to the girl until he completely filled her thoughts. A show of love sometimes betrays an honest heart, if the heart has not as ally a steady head. The girl came to love, but she was wary and would not own that she cared. The summer passed, and she thought, 'He will go and I shall find out then what it all means.'

"Through the autumn and winter there came occasional letters and presents. She believed that she might love and she knew how well she did. At last, when summer was near again, the man to whom she had attributed all sort of imagined excellencies, spun only from her own heart, suddenly appeared and asked her to go with him at once for a long journey through Northern Europe. She was in heaven; every dream of her imaginative girlhood seemed about to be fulfilled. They talked and planned, and when she could not put off the question any longer, she shyly asked when they were to be married. Now, judge what the man was. He could not marry because he had a living wife and children. He thought the girl knew he was married, and he was so blinded by his own perverted ways that it came to him as a shock that the woman he had cajoled was innocent. He had not been able to see far enough into her nature to understand the outrage he had committed. He

thought he was making sacrifices and taking risks for her sake. All ended there, dear, but the end overwhelmed one poor soul with a horror that nearly quenched it."

Emily leaned over and put her head upon Miss Thomas's shoulder. Presently she whispered:

"I am so sorry you have been anxious; you need not trouble about Mr. McLean; I hate him! I hope Theodore will not speak to me about him; I hate the thought of him! I shall never speak to him again if I can help it."

The two women watched late, as women have watched before. They heard Theodore come in, and Miss Thomas met him in the entry.

"You need not worry about Emily; she is ashamed of her acquaintance with Mr. McLean; she does not like him. The affair was forced upon her, poor child; don't talk to her about it. Have you been talking to Mr. McLean this evening?"

"Talking to him! No, there was not much talk. I have fought him and left him in a gutter; but that is a matter about which it is not well to say much. Good-night, dear friend, I am beastly tired."

On the morning after the battle Theodore, with a bruise near the cheek-bone and an uncomfortable nose that looked as if it had been borrowed, felt some uneasiness about explanations to Margaret. His week was up the next day; he must go home, and he could not leave without another meeting. He might plead a bicycle accident, but people were so minute in those days concerning all the details of anything relating to bicycles that considerable imagination would

be required to give the accident story an air of veracity. Possibly if he waited until evening he might see the Lawrences under cover of the dusk of a piazza, or at least in the half-light of shaded lamps; meanwhile he had better look up his bicycle, left in a rather casual way at the station where he had boarded the train. He breakfasted and smoked and read a newspaper with such severity of aspect that Miss Thomas and Emily did not venture upon much talking. Towards the middle of the morning he walked to the station; in the waiting-room he came upon Mary Ellerton. Her face lighted up as she saw him, and there was something very cordial and intimate in the way she shook his hand.

"Are you going to Manchester? Please take care of me. I am on my way to see Mrs. Netherby."

Marshall was not pleased when he first caught sight of this girl, who was always coming into his life as the woman he loved did not; yet as he knew her better he could not help admiring her clear, refined beauty, her poise of character, her subtle but capable mind. He was too clever himself not to recognise her superiority, her wonderful charm, her completeness. He went with her to Manchester. Before they parted he was conscious of a mental excitement of a rather intoxicating kind; he would have liked it if their journey had been lengthened out by an hour or two.

They were no sooner seated in the train than she gave him a swift overlooking and said quietly, but with directness:

"What did you do with Mr. McLean?"

Marshall looked at her steadily for a moment, saying nothing.

There was something in her eyes and a minute rippling about the corners of her mouth that were too much for him. He smiled for the first time that morning and felt it in his swollen cheek.

"I think it is generally understood that a suspect is not obliged to say anything that may tend to self-incrimination."

"May I ask where you left him?"

"On the road between Manchester station and the hotel."

"Was he walking?"

Theodore smiled again, rather grimly, and shook his head.

"Driving?"

"No."

"Just camping by the roadside, perhaps?"

Theodore made no response.

"You are not in a conversational humour this morning, Mr. Marshall. You are not feeling ill, I hope. No? Nor depressed by a feeling of—" she paused a moment—"shall we say—guilt?"

Theodore could not help laughing. Mary went on with her badinage.

"Perhaps Mrs. Netherby is looking after your victim. At all events she may be able to relieve my anxiety. I really hope you will not have to face a jury. Do you know you were very rude to me last night? Almost as lacking in common courtesy as—well, say, this morning. You were charmingly informal in the way you came to supper; it was hard to

find that you were only pursuing poor Mr. McLean; that you would not wait a moment to talk with me. This morning you cannot escape me for ten minutes—but talk to me—not for the world!”

They parted at the platform after Theodore had seen the lady into a cab. He took the first train going east, found his bicycle, and rode home, his mind dwelling a good deal upon a woman that was not the one he loved.

As she drove away Miss Ellerton kept a sharp lookout upon the road she was following. She had not gone an eighth of a mile when she saw something that changed her intent expression to one of excitement and discovery. She made up her mind on the spot to walk back along that piece of road.

Mrs. Netherby welcomed her morning visitor with enthusiasm. After exclamations and osculations she asked eagerly:

“What have you done with that scamp, McLean? He was here yesterday afternoon, and would go somewhere else in spite of me. He promised to look in in the evening, but nothing more have I seen or heard of him. Was he your way? What has been happening? Don’t look so, you provoking creature; tell me quickly.”

“How do I look?”

“Simply perfect; you fit your gown in a way to madden one. What have you got to tell?” Mrs. Netherby was very eager; very much alert for news.

“Not much, Mrs. Netherby. Your gentleman called upon us at a little after seven o’clock and asked for some supper, which he got, paying for it by talking

very well as long as he stayed. He left us early, going off in the station cab, and more your deponent sayeth not."

Mrs. Netherby sniffed—or something like it.

"Little Emily, I suppose?"

Mary shrugged her shoulders.

Mrs. Netherby crossed the room and pushed a button.

"We will run him down, my dear, we will have the beach waggon instanter and go to the Masconomo. We will ask him to lunch; if he is not at the hotel, we will try the club."

McLean was not at the Masconomo. He had sent for his things the night before and settled his bill. Where had he gone? It was not known. Mrs. Netherby frowned. "We will try the club," she whispered to Mary. "The club, Matthews,"—this in a voice audible and a trifle sharp.

McLean was not about the club and there was no news of him, although Mrs. Netherby sat out the morning on the piazza and lunched her young friend there instead of at her own house, where they went in time for Mrs. Netherby's afternoon nap. Mary made no move to go until the horse was probably put up; then she said she would walk to the station; and walk she would in spite of protests. Mrs. Netherby was glad to get rid of her. No questions, frank, or wary, had resulted in more information about McLean, yet Mrs. Netherby believed in her heart that Mary knew something—much or little—that she would not tell. Mrs. Netherby was consequently mildly exasperated, and wanted an opportunity to

meditate; to guess at what was happening or had happened.

Mary walked briskly on her way until near that part of the road that had fixed her attention earlier in the day. Here she lingered and looked the ground over like a woodsman on the track of game. At last she stopped opposite a bit of roadside where the grass and weeds were flattened. She drew a little nostril-dilating breath, as might a highly sensitive wild animal scenting blood. Suddenly her expression changed; her face grew anxious and stern. She passed over to the fence where, almost hidden under the lower rail, she had seen an object that glittered. She picked up a small pistol, handsomely mounted; on the silver band of the stock there were engraved letters. Her face cleared as she read them, then darkened again with anger.

She was not very familiar with pistols and by no means comfortable in handling this one. But with a prompt concentration of mind that was characteristic she set herself to study its construction. Plainly it was loaded; she did not care to carry it in that condition. Very careful to keep the weapon pointed away from her, she examined and tried until she got the cylinder out; then she poked out the cartridges, threw them into the marsh, and put the pistol—where? She had no pocket: the waist of her dress fitted too closely to hide a pistol—even a small one. She had no wrap, her purse would not answer, but she had a parasol, which she shut up—the pistol inside. As she turned again towards the station a trace of a smile flickered at the corners of her mouth and eyes, and she said



to that part of Manchester within her view, audibly, in a meditative but slightly exultant tone: "Not even a chance to use it."

That evening Marshall said good-bye to the Lawrences—to Margaret with the others. She was very quiet; he was not quite at his ease. The next morning he made an early start for home. His holiday had not been dull. Now it was over, it would have been hard for him to tell whether he was glad or sorry to take up his work again.

## Chapter XIX

### THE PARK-SIDE IMPROVEMENT AND DAMAGE COMPANY

"To wiser desires it is satisfaction enough to deserve, though not to enjoy, the favours of fortune. Let Providence provide for fools; 't is not partiality, but equity in God, who deals with us but as our natural parents."

THE Park-Side Improvement Company was a chartered corporation begotten by Michael Le Mark, and born of the authority of a great state, under laws framed in the interest of capitalists, and enacted by legislators who were neither learned, far-seeing, nor devoted to any particular policy or formulated principles. The laws so made are not to be condemned offhand on account of their origin; it would be a clever person who could show conclusively that they have been the cause of more harm than good; their origin is simply noted in passing. The matter of moment is that the Park-Side Improvement Company was at first Michael Le Mark in an invisible cloak—Le Mark free to do without incurring criticism a number of things it would have been inconvenient or disagreeable to do in his own name. The incorporators, besides Le Mark and his friend, Mr. McLean, were inconspicuous people.

The company itself was not brought to the atten-

tion of the public with advertisements and circulars; it was singularly modest and unobtrusive. For two years after its birth it was so quiet that persons not directly concerned might well have overlooked its existence. Nevertheless, in that time it had acquired much land, not bought openly by a declared agent of the company, but by several small men, who deeded their purchases to Le Mark's conveyancer—he holding the properties in trust, as it were, for the Park-Side Company during its diffident youth. The time came when, overcoming its early shyness, the company resolutely came forward in every emergency that needed the doing of something that, done by Le Mark, might have injuriously touched the reputation he insisted was his, defying the world to assail it.

Le Mark owned all the stock of the Park-Side Improvement Company except a few shares that he had assigned to persons selected by himself as, for special reasons, particularly desirable associates, and a much larger number of shares that he had transferred to Mr. James Berry.

Mr. Berry was a man of genial and easy manners, who had a large and intimate acquaintance among the folk of the City Hall. He was remarkably well posted as to local politics. He had many statesman-like qualities. He might have been admitted to the bar on the strength of his knowledge concerning evasions of law. Mr. Berry knew Le Mark as that gentleman did not know himself. When Le Mark mentioned the public service as a preamble to asking Mr. Berry's assistance in some delicate negotiation or other business of a private nature, Mr. Berry's eyes

twinkled in a way that often wounded Le Mark's sensibilities. But as it requires the courage of entire rectitude to challenge the twinkle of an eye, Le Mark made no protest. There is always something to be endured in the advocacy of a good cause.

The understanding between Le Mark and Berry in the matter of the Improvement Company was perfect, if not reduced to formal statement. Morchester was growing; its growth ought by all means to be in accordance with well-digested plans rather than by haphazard accretions. A glance at the map showed that the space between that part of the city where the college stood and the park by the waterside was obviously the ground to be used in an extension of the quarter occupied by the well-to-do. With an outer line of boulevards connecting with the park roads and the proper running of streets in the enclosed space, with judicious restrictions in the title-deeds of lands sold by the Improvement Company, there might be developed—given a few years—a quarter to rival that of the Back Bay of Boston.

Was it easy to conceive of anything more for the good and glory of Morchester than an area entirely devoted to beautiful houses, where the rich could all live comfortably together, secure from obtrusion of poverty,—an area from which they could drive to the park without passing discordant factories or squalid tenements?

Who was there to see to the execution of this excellent plan? Who to conceive it? The City Surveyors or the Department of Highways? Never! Surveyors and the chief officers of the bureau were

wholly absorbed by details of administration, and political manœuvres looking to the defence of a position occupied or the gaining of a new one. Evidently the need existed for the foresight of a genius and the practical sagacity of a man of affairs.

The land to be improved must be acquired and brought under a single control; this was necessary for any large plan. Why should the unintelligent owners of small farms and truck gardens enjoy the benefit of higher prices due to improvements they never would have made themselves? After the land was in safe hands, the plans for boulevards and streets must be brought to the attention of the Board of Surveys by some one having effective influence with that body—not an office-holder, but a man who unofficially dictates appointments and removals. That the interest of this person might be strong and genuine, Mr. Berry doubtless parted with a large portion of his stock, by the simple process of assignment, before the projected thoroughfares were definitely put upon the city plan.

Before the City Council had voted to open the boulevards and streets that were essential for the success of the Improvement Company, Mr. Berry had left but very few shares that were not assigned to good friends of his who in one way or another could be useful in determining the city fathers as a body to co-operate with Le Mark in carrying out his plans for the improvement of Morchester.

Mr. Berry was satisfied; he rather preferred ready money to shares, bank-notes to a cheque. Some of his friends who were peculiarly placed had the same

preference. But Le Mark knew nothing of details: he simply provided Mr. Berry with money and asked no questions, if the total outlay was within reasonable limits; when a man is so competent as Berry it is not the part of good generalship to leave him no discretion.

The Park-Side Improvement Company began to attract attention—was introduced to the public, as it were—shortly after the City Council had acted and the roads were assured. It owned a great deal of land all about Mary Ellerton's little farm, but Miss Ellerton still owned the farm, and Le Mark was glad, of course, that a lady he so much admired was to share in the benefits of his foresight and industry. It was fitting that she should take an active part in the management of the loan exhibition of pictures, which was to be the starting-point in arousing an interest in art that was expected to result in the building of a museum on the Boulevard Marshall at a point near to the park. The museum would not be well situated for the convenience of common people, but it would be easy of access for owners of carriages, who drove that way every day or two; and, as the Improvement Company owned the site selected, its purchase, at an advance over the price paid by the company, would be encouraging to its shareholders.

Le Mark recognised that while small men moralise about methods, great men look to results. The boulevards, the museum, and the new quarter were to be a monument to himself that would silence with eloquent testimony the cavilings of shrimps. What are many shrimps to a large and vigorous shark? Who cares for their opinions? A generation or two

passes and the echoes of mere voices are stilled, but public improvements have permanency. Morals are vapour compared to substantial buildings and well invested funds.

Le Mark was very rich, but he was carrying heavy burdens and the times were against him. Investments that were made with a view to a handsome half-yearly return were ceasing to pay, or were paying but little. Ready money was hard to come by; there were few who had it, and the few were timid. Where, then, did that obnoxious young Marshall find means to pay his notes and discount his bills? His paper was disappearing from the street and his credit was improving. Was it possible he could be making money? Mr. Garrison did not understand more than Le Mark how this could be; he knew that fuel for the Marshall mill had cost somewhat more than it should, and was, much of it, none too good at that; he knew of many little sources of inconvenience and consequently of expense, that should have been troublesome to the mill management, but he did not recite them to Le Mark. McLean was equally in the dark. He swore at the mention of Marshall's name, yet he had nothing to suggest. Nevertheless he kept Marshall in mind.

One day in October Theodore received a visit from a political manager of the Seventh Ward, who showed him a list made up of the names of men in his employment who were supposed to be Democrats; he asked that Marshall would exert any influence he saw fit to bring these misguided men into the true fold. Theodore listened, made the man commit himself

thoroughly by an explicit statement of what he wanted, and then invited him into the entry and turned him over to the gatekeeper, with instructions to look at him so that he would know him, to put him out summarily, and never to allow him again inside the works.

A few days later the mill was placarded inside and out with printed bills warning the men that the management had a list of Democrats, furnished by the Republican machine; that all Democrats not declaring an intention of voting the Republican ticket at the forthcoming election were to be discharged as fast as their places could be filled.

Theodore had the bills torn down, and tried hard to find out who had put them up, particularly inside the works. Barney, the watchman, was sure no stranger had come through the gate at night, and the only conclusion to be drawn was that some night hand had posted the placards—who, could not be discovered.

A dozen or more leading men, selected from the different gangs, were called into the office and told of the visitor and of his list; of how he was treated. They were also told that how the men voted was the men's business, every man for himself; that the management of the works did not care to know the intentions of the men or of any man, or the nature of the votes cast or to be cast; that voting was a thing to be done according to conscience and conviction, and no more a matter to be interfered with by an employer than a man's religion. The incident ended here, but it made talk and disquieted the men, who felt that the affair was unusual; that there was something queer about



it. Anything that calls in question the integrity of the manager and makes talk is unfortunate for the discipline of a factory.

The next shot of the enemy was a notice from the assessors that the value of the Marshall mill property had, for purposes of taxation, been fixed at nearly double the assessment of former years. This meant a new annual expense of over two thousand dollars. The practice in Morchester in the matter of real estate assessments was kinder than the law, especially in case of manufacturing properties. The law called for assessment at value; the practice was to assess at perhaps one-third the value. Two-thirds was well within the law and there was no redress except by favour. Theodore found the assessors cold, and he had little hope of comfort from the Board of Revision.

There had formerly been a grog shop on Water Street nearly opposite the gate of the works. Theodore had opposed the granting of a license to sell liquor there on grounds recognised by the license board as valid; the place was shut up. It was opened again; a license had been issued, and the board refused to revoke a permission it had just granted.

It was a fixed principle of Marshall's management that his men should not be fuddled; they must not bring liquor into the works, come to work under the influence of drink, or stay away because they had been drinking. No man made inefficient or irregular by tippling could keep a place in the mill. This was understood, and the resulting restraint was much to the benefit of the men. It was a bitter pill to see

good hands crossing the street at noon to take an impure drink under the eyes of the office windows. An order was issued forbidding the men to go to the saloon at noon. This was looked upon as a blow at personal liberty; men continued to go for their drinks; a few were discharged; there was much hard feeling, and bad blood was spreading through the place.

McLean had put a little money into the Park-Side Improvement Company. The company controlled a great deal of land; it had actually paid for very little; there was a mountain of mortgages. McLean was hard up and Le Mark chafed under his burdens. Both gentlemen regretted their investment in the Marshall bonds. In taking them they were riding for a fall. They longed to shut up the mill, foreclose the mortgage, come to an agreement with the railroad, and get out their money. They knew that all this would take time, but so also would the Park-Side Improvement affairs go slowly. It was really important to clear up the Marshall matter as soon as possible that the Park-Side situation should be eased a little. McLean, and Le Mark, through his friend, Mr. Berry, could do wonders with the political people in Morchester—a license, an assessment; these were mere trifles.

Le Mark's weakness as a social vulture lay in the fact that he "flocked too much by himself." A habit of posing as a public benefactor prevented him from entering into open alliance with others whose purposes were similar to his own—men who more frankly sought to augment their fortunes at the expense of the rest of the community. There was a group of

successful schemers in Morchester who recognised each other as members of one guild. They were not partners in business, and they worked independently, nevertheless they formed a small fraternity. Their aims, their methods, their perils, were intelligible one to another, and they could act together when there was advantage in doing so. They saw in Le Mark one having no juster claim than themselves to general respect, whose pretensions to respectability were offensive. They recognised in this assumption of virtue a weakness and a lack of sincerity that made them distrust him quite as much as they were themselves distrusted.

Nowadays there are few men, pitting themselves against society in great speculations, who are strong enough to stand alone. Le Mark's resources were great, but at times he shivered as the sense of his isolation came home to him. There were men he could use, but he had not a single ally among powers of the first class upon whom in an emergency he could depend with confidence. McLean was a politician; in finance he was a credulous boy.

The set of braves to whom Le Mark might have turned, if he had not affected to believe himself superior to them in position and character, was composed of those called by Fergus Frank "the Dukes." For most people "the Barons" would have connoted more, but Frank had read somewhere of the Duke Warner who had embroidered upon his surcoat, "I am Duke Warner, the chief of the Great Company, the enemy of God, of piety and mercy"; and in his hatred of a class to whose rapacity he attributed the worst

of the political and social evils that in his opinion menaced his beloved Democracy, he could find no other name that seemed to apply so aptly.

There was published in Morchester a weekly paper called *The Argus*. It was Democratic, proletarian, more or less socialistic. It was in sympathy with the trades-unions and antagonistic to trusts, monopolies, and the money-power. It was edited with ability and widely read by artisans and labourers. Frank had a partial ownership in *The Argus*, and used it, as he had occasion, to give voice to his bitterness of spirit. He had persuaded Churchill to write for his paper a series of articles attacking Le Mark and condemning the collection of great campaign funds from corporations and capitalists for use, without accounting, by unscrupulous political agents; and Churchill—with a recklessness partly due to natural courage, partly to obstinacy in the face of objection sure to come from his friends that he should identify himself with *The Argus*, partly to the irresponsibility of a man with no definite place in the world—had signed his diatribes with his own name.

As *The Argus* was the only paper of consequence in Morchester that could call its soul its own; as it was, within certain limits, a power, it was quite worth while for persons who ventured far in directions that sometimes ran athwart the polling booths to know what it was saying. It was read by men who had tried in a dozen ways to throttle it. To stalwart partisans Churchill's papers were scandalous, and his name became a stench to many who before would not have taken the trouble to remember it.

At about the time of Churchill's tirades a reporter of *The Argus* came upon the posters about Marshall's mill, warning his men against attempts to coerce them in voting. The reporter made a column of copy out of a poster and an interview with an alleged employee. There was a furious denunciation of Marshall and a summons to the men to strike for their rights as American citizens. This bit of overdone indignation reached the office as the paper was going to press; space was made for it and it appeared on the same page with one of Churchill's contributions. Nothing would do but in the next number, Churchill, who had learned the facts from Theodore, but had not apprised him of what he intended to do, must have an article retracting, explaining, denying, and vouching for Marshall as a good and just man, personally known as such to the undersigned. This put *The Argus*, from a newspaper point of view, in an absurd position. It took all Fergus Frank's influence with the editor-in-chief to get the thing published, but if it had not appeared Churchill would have become unmanageable, and there were reasons why Frank did not desire a quarrel.

Nothing could have been more distasteful to Marshall than this nonsense; it annoyed him extremely, and, although he did not know the fact at the time, it coupled his name with Churchill's in a way that added new dangers to his situation. The old story of the row at the "Clinton" was revived; it was remembered that two luncheons at the table where some of the Dukes were sure to be, had been rudely, impudently disturbed.

McLean called Le Mark's attention to the numbers of *The Argus* that contained the charge against Marshall and the refutation. Le Mark met Abram Sanbourne, chief of the Dukes, director in several banks, in twenty companies of one sort and another—among them the M. B. & P. R. R.—and, after some observations on the "basis of social order," on the necessity of saving the country by the election of Mr. McKinley, he got round to the personal abuse he had suffered for performing a public service, and dilated upon the attacks of the vile *Argus*, upon Churchill and his association with Marshall, Marshall's ingratitude, his infidelity to the party, his debts, his sure ruin—"Neither capacity nor credit, sir. I understand your people are selling him coal; the M. & L. E. has ceased to do so. If I sold him at all, I should demand cash against bills of lading. Pity, sir, a great pity! His father was a hard-working man, but this fellow is a bad lot, an impudent young dog; head full of anarchistic notions," and so on.

Le Mark also took advantage of the occasion to sound Mr. Sanbourne about street-car lines through the Park-Side Improvement Company's tract, and to mention the matter of the museum. He was attempting an approachment to a great power as well as forwarding a conspiracy—again trying to kill two birds with one stone. He thought of Mrs. Netherby and wondered if he could use her to obtain a footing with Sanbourne.

## Chapter XX

### MR. NETHERBY AS A PHILOSOPHER

What chance has a diffident little thing like conscience in controversy with those lusty and shameless rascals, the senses, and that hoary villain, "the Pride of Life"?

EARLY in October most of our Morchester friends were home again, intent upon setting their houses, their wardrobes, and their plans in order for the coming season. The Lawrences returned before the first of the month; Mrs. Thane and Miss Ellerton a little later; Miss Thomas and Emily Marshall on the tenth. Mrs. Netherby stayed away as long as she could, but as she was a rather more important person in Morchester than on the North Shore, the lust of glory was too much for her theories about the restful autumn in a house by the sea after the hurly-burly of summer holidays was over. She had opened her house in town by the twentieth and was there every day, although she was supposed to be at "The Farm." She generally slept in the country, to be sure, but her hand was upon the pulse of Morchester.

Mr. Netherby, not Churchill, had found a horse for Miss Ellerton, and had him in keeping at "The Farm," waiting in top condition for the coming of his mistress, who immediately upon her return rode out to see him. For this expedition she took a riding-school

hack, and borrowed her aunt's coachman to follow as groom. This was before Mrs. Netherby's return; her husband did the honours of the house and stables. Mary's saddle was shifted to her own horse; Mr. Netherby had a saddle put on the beast that had brought her, and they started to ride back in a roundabout way by country roads. After the new animal had been tested as to performance and manners, approved, and named Tawno-Chikno, or "the beauty of the world," the pace settled down to a walk and conversation became possible.

Mr. Netherby was not handsome on horseback more than elsewhere, but he rode as if his life had been passed in the saddle; as if there, at least, he felt at ease. He took off his glasses, rubbed the side of his nose, readjusted the glasses, and said somewhat peevishly:

"Brick of a fool—your Marshall young man; going headlong to the devil; meanwhile an instrument of divine wrath; if you don't know it, it's a secret—made a punching-bag of the gaudy McLean."

"A punching-bag?"—from Mary.

"Yes—a thing the pugilist fellows set up and hit, left—right, right—left, until their arms are tired."

"When was this?" Mary said, with eyes slowly opening, and revealing surprise, astonishment, and interest.

"Now, now, young lady; that's overdone, you know; bet you fifties to fives you can mention date and place."

"Ah, Mr. Netherby, you are too clever for a poor girl who scarcely has entered your Morchester world."



"Am I? Will you tell what you know? Want me to tell what I know first, of course; keep your own counsel then, I suppose? not fair though; what do you say? Drop the subject?"

"No; by no means; I want to hear."

"Well, do you promise?"

"Yes, I promise."

"Promise what?"

"Always to trust you more than any one else."

"Humph! I thought so; you won't commit yourself, but use discretion. Superior young woman. 'Woman without discretion'—forgotten the rest; don't apply in your case anyway; here goes; the wife smelt a rat."

Mary opened her eyes again. Mr. Netherby resumed:

"Nosed him in the lobby. She only knew McLean came and went, but she suspected he had met Marshall down your way; had reasons of her own for prognosticating a row. Young lady came to see her who had seen McLean the night before he disappeared; young lady without woman's natural loquacity or curiosity. Wife took a nap—season of meditation; telegraphed McLean—Morchester, Bar Harbour, and elsewhere; two days—no answer; summoned detective from Boston; enterprising woman! Ran the scent to earth in Beverly within twenty-four hours; detective would have been absolutely of no use if there was any good to be got; was n't; don't know about that, though; my withered heart has been warmed; detective, got up as a waiter, took in McLean's supper—soft food, taken through a tube; de-

tective chatted with doctor; doctor said victim would live—on gruel for a while; he would not be able to comminute solid food for a week; body bruises were simply brutal. Who do you suppose did it?"

"I am afraid, Mr. Netherby, that your suspicions are well founded. I am afraid it was Mr. Marshall. At all events, Mr. Marshall followed Mr. McLean to our house, stayed with us while Mr. McLean stayed, and followed him when he went away."

"Looks as if young man would have to prove an alibi or go to jail; justice vindicated, of course, but beastly law has nothing to do with justice. Wife says McLean behaved badly, very badly. She sent him anonymous soups and messes for a week; hoped to drive him mad; detective carried them; McLean thought they came from you; asked the waiter, that is, wife's detective, who brought the stuff; he said a housemaid; was it a short young woman with very red hair? Answers to one of your people, does it not? Waiter lied; said it was. McLean probably believes he has won your heart."

Mary said, "He is very clever." One would have thought that everything might be forgiven to so brilliant a person, her tone was so full of admiration. "But tell me, Mr. Netherby," she asked, briskly, "how Mr. Marshall's affairs are coming on?"

"Can't say, really; statements not so bad as they might be, but steadily worse; he's going to the bow-wows, but dying by inches; things at the mill in good shape; no money making nowadays, all the same. He'd better look out for McLean; McLean and Le Mark will 'fix' him—hook or by crook."

Mary was silent; presently she said,

"Do you ever see *The Argus*?"

"Yes; take it in; lots of fun; little chap, Churchill, been pelting the Gorilla; making the old beast grunt with rage. Churchill is friend of yours, is n't he?"

"Yes, after a fashion; he was the first man I knew in Morchester and he has always been very kind; he has been sending me *The Argus*—the numbers that had his articles. What do you think, Mr. Netherby, about this raising of money for campaigns?"

"O Lord! what a topic! Immoral? yes; necessary? very; why? once pay blackmail you always pay. What is the money paid for? For protection of some sort and opportunity. You thought it was for love of country? Not a bit of it—love of bank accounts; nothing else in it. Corsican peasants put out food for brigands; brigands steal only half as much as they would otherwise; protect crops and shoot the tax-gatherer; simple as A B C."

"Do you think Mr. Churchill's articles will do any good?"

"Can't say; nothing in 'em but what every one knows. They won't do Churchill any good."

"Why? What do you mean?"

"My dear young lady, the money comes from business men, who are not searching for righteousness but dollars. Do you think they want a crack-a-jack at their coat-tails screaming about their souls? They are none too sure they have any souls, but they are not going to take chances of not having incomes. A nice expensive pew in a church; an old coat for a missionary box at Christmas; a cheque now and then

for a charity, will fix up a soul all right. What's the harm of buying votes, any way? Seller has no principles and probably no opinions; you get a vote for your principles or policy; he has a drink, a new suit of clothes, a ton of coal, or his wife's funeral expenses."

"Mr. Netherby, I am shocked!"

"Of course, but that is what they say. As a matter of fact, the man who buys a vote, even in a left-handed way, is a worse traitor and a greater blackguard than he would be if he cut down and defiled every flag in the country."

Mary looked volumes of assent and waited for more.

"Madame la Comtesse," Mr. Netherby said abruptly, as if opening a new subject, "have you heard about the Park-Side Improvement Company? The murder is out: company for opening up the country between College Hill and the Boulevards; company—Le Mark, McLean, and beneficiaries of their bounty; your farm right in the middle; chance of your life; can fight, get in the way, delay operations, ask damages, make 'em settle on your own terms; enjoy, in the end, the fruits of their labours; own town lots instead of truck gardens."

"But why should I oppose plans that must certainly improve the value of my land?"

"General principles; keep the devil at the end of a forked stick; parley with him, he'll scorch you; you're in pretty deep, you know, in the mill business; got Gorilla and company to reckon with there; better have basis for compromise. Are you going in for the museum business? Help Gorilla roast his chestnuts, eh? Wife'll want me to subscribe; rather build a

museum somewhere else myself, but wife is wife, you know; dutiful husband; sign cheques as presented. You just watch the Gorilla work the town—picture show, private view, political gents in the arms of fashion, public opening, fashion receives, speech by mayor, rag-tag and bobtail in full force, all agog."

Mary said she had promised to help Mrs. Netherby in the matter of the picture exhibition, and expressed her appreciation of the pains Mr. Le Mark had taken to explain its usefulness. She then asked Mr. Netherby another hard question.

"Why is it that public affairs are so badly managed? What is the matter? No one seems satisfied, yet nothing is done to make things better."

"May I inquire, *chère Comtesse*, why you ask me these questions? Is there not your McLean?"

"Yes, you may inquire, and I will answer. I ask you because you are wise ——"

"If odd," Mr. Netherby interposed.

"You are sane and shrewd; I believe you take the trouble to read and to think. Why not help me a little instead of obliging me to puzzle myself unnecessarily?"

Mr. Netherby looked at Mary with an expression of mingled weariness and interest.

"Good gracious! However, to hear is to obey. Once upon a time there was a fashion of kings; it is not yet obsolete, but we have made bold to experiment with rulers of another sort. In the old days Gracious Majesty, or a better man in Majesty's name, disposed of the lives, lands, wives, and other movable property of common folk, in a royal manner, more

or less splendid from a royal point of view, but irksome to small men. There was a habit of pillage, bloodletting, and invasion of private rights, that was a concomitant of ruling, whether the rulers were great or small. Divinity hedged the king, and authority was born of Heaven. The great ravished and the humble kissed hands.

"Then there grew up stubborn sects that would have none of these time-worn sanctions for the pillage of property, the binding of consciences, and the violation of hearths. They smashed the tradition of the Divine right of kings and made a cult of their own rights,—the rights of men,—of the ordinary sort. Princes were abolished and the people took over the business of ruling. They have been at it for a hundred years. But a century is a short time in which to extirpate the influence of institutions that endured for twenty centuries. We have not yet recovered from the exhilarating effects of the statements in the Declaration of Independence.

"We are still hugging ourselves because we have no Czar, no compulsion to reverence in speech some Bantam Emperor clamouring, in face of the derision of mankind, to be accorded the honours of Cæsar. We have personal liberty, rampant individualism; we make forced obeisance to none; all are equal before the law. Authority neither takes our lives, our liberty, nor our wives or children; it can not invade our homes, restrict our opinions, nor seal our lips; it only robs us—moderately; it touches nothing we hold sacred, nothing but the trash of our purses, and that so considerably that we can replenish the purse with less trouble than must be taken to protest."

Mr. Netherby paused. He was flushed; he had spoken rapidly and with little of his ordinary eccentricity of expression. He looked at Mary as if embarrassed by this revelation of himself and dropped at once into his old manner.

"Still you complain; want things to go better; and only one of ten commandments habitually broken by authority! Unreasonable creature!"

Mary answered gravely. She counted it a great thing to have made Mr. Netherby talk without affectation; to have sounded his depths, so to speak, and she was anxious not to discourage his disposition to let himself go. She said:

"You are taking a wide view, as I supposed you would; you see things in perspective and you give stealing its proper importance in relation to other iniquities. As I understand you, the vices of our governing system are all, or mostly all, connected with direct or indirect peculation. I should like to inquire if license in this direction is not the surest as well as the most insidious way of reviving the fashion of kings and all that fashion entails, or of arriving, with or without kings, at all the old evils?"

"No doubt of it; theft in avoidance of law or under cover of law is the vice of the age. As it is not one that undermines the physical powers very fast, it can be practised until it grows to be an art. As it affects economic conditions it changes the currents of thought; already wealth in the popular mind is becoming synonymous with robbery. There follow contempt of law, anarchy, riot, murder, all brutal lusts let loose,—the devil come to his own."

"And still you think things are going well?"

"'Mills of the gods'; everlastingly grinding; and lots of time ahead as well as past. When we are dust, that dust may grow a better grain."

"And we have nothing to do but to be passive?"

"Madam, we are talking of a national habit—a stream of ocean. Who can change its course? Enormous energy is needed for that. What is the direction of energy among us? Is it against the stream or with it? Christians! Do we do as we would be done by? All the brains of forty-five states and two or three territories are directed towards doing to others as we would not have them do to us, as we do not mean to let them do to us, if we are fit to survive. Here is a problem for you: accommodate your Christianity to the law of the survival of the fittest. Will the strong man play the game according to the natural law, the inherited instincts to which he owes his being, or according to an inspired precept?"

"You think the precept was inspired?" Mary said immediately, as Mr. Netherby paused.

"I do, assuredly. That we are capable of seeing its wisdom as affecting our own peace of mind, of anticipating in imagination its fruits, if the precepts were followed, indicates a divine spark within us. Everything that is really worth while comes to us because now and then, here and there, little by little, we apply the precept—the greatest robber of them all in his family relations, say. But I am afraid it will take another two thousand years before this doctrine shines out as a lamp to our feet in every step of life—as the last word for the practical conduct of



affairs and for the furthering of our own interests, as it really is."

"Is not this the socialist ideal?" Mary said.

Mr. Netherby laughed a little harshly.

"The socialist ideal is that the other fellow shall do to him as he would be done by; and strip the other fellow, hang him, if necessary, if he does n't; a general surrender by agreement or compulsion and thereafter share and share alike; every one for all and all hindermost, annulling the law of the survival of the fittest."

"But you say you cannot reconcile that law to the golden rule."

"Pardon. I asked you to."

"How do you do it, Mr. Netherby?"

"I've a notion that in time the fittest will prove to be those who discern the practical wisdom of the rule."

Mary said, "Oh!" and thought a minute. Then she asked, almost timidly,

"Am I to understand that you believe there is nothing to be done now to hasten progress towards better things? nothing to do but to wait?"

"No, insistent soul, there are two things to be done: one any man can do; do himself what he would have others do; the other but a few can do,—those who have brains for it,—apply those brains to discovering specific causes of evil, devising specific remedies, and applying them by force of energy and brains such as would create a Standard Oil Company. Unfortunately our brains all seem to be going into pipe-lines and there are lamentations only for evil manners."

"Mr. Netherby, I wonder you do not have more to

do with public affairs yourself; you certainly have a conscience and brains in plenty."

"My dear Miss Ellerton, can you tell me where my shoe pinches? It is enough to say that I am the last man to convert the public to anything; but I keep a sharp lookout, and I never lose a chance to scotch villany—if I can. Good-bye; I turn off here to leave this brute at his place; and God forgive you for making me talk as I have this morning!"

## Chapter XXI

### MISS ELLERTON'S LOVERS

*Fal.* Of what quality was your love, then?

*Ford.* Like a fair house built on another man's ground."

McLEAN'S intimacy with Miss Constance Plunkett had not prospered in the summer. He threw away an opportunity to see her at Bar Harbour that he might exhibit his accomplishments to Emily Marshall and plague Mrs. Netherby. He might as well have taken the time spent in seclusion at Beverly for a visit to Mount Desert, if he had not—for reasons that in that time of retreat seemed inadequate—elected to try his snares once more upon Marshall's sister, and, as it happened, caught a Tartar.

In his season of seclusion McLean had time for self-examination. He found that, if he loved Miss Plunkett neither more nor less than earlier in the year, the idea of making her his wife was distinctly less pleasing since his acquaintance with Emily Marshall and Miss Ellerton. Miss Plunkett was exacting; it would mean an immense amount of careful lying to recover the ground lost during the summer. As to attractions that appeal to the eye, his neglected love was not to be named with Emily Marshall; and Mary Ellerton was not only a beauty, which could not be said of either of the others, but in every way she was

so superior to them—to any woman, in fact, that McLean could think of—that after a little his thoughts turned to her in a way that surprised him.

But Miss Plunkett was a good match; the connection would be useful; she was really rich; and he was almost sure that it was quite within his powers to marry her. He was not so sure that her money would be at his disposal. Emily's twelve thousand a year was something, but the family connection did not please him. To marry her would be to indulge a freak of the senses; it would be folly. It struck him that for a man of his pretensions he had lately played the fool quite as much as was admissible. He wondered how much money Miss Ellerton had. If he could be certain that her fortune was large enough to make it reasonable to take some chances, he felt that it would give him pleasure to throw Constance Plunkett over and marry to suit his finer instincts.

Miss Ellerton was so much in his mind, and he had formed so good an opinion of her abilities, that it was perhaps natural to think of her in connection with the dainty little dishes of invalid food that had daily found their way to his room in Beverly—how, he could not discover. The Good Samaritan had stopped to see him and not only denied the dishes, but sworn upon his honour that he had told no one. Mrs. Netherby could not know; only Miss Ellerton had the slightest hint upon which to hang suspicion. It did occur to him that his jellies and soups might come from Emily, but it was quite out of character for her to have sent them, while it seemed a thing Miss Ellerton might have done, if it could be done secretly.

How she or any one knew where he was it was hard to imagine. He doubted if there was any one else clever enough to find out. She had probably questioned Marshall about his singular demand for supper. That brute had possibly hung about to see what became of his prey—followed, it might be, on his damned bicycle.

So McLean got it into his head that Miss Ellerton had heard something of his affair with Emily, perhaps of his first quarrel with Marshall; that she had admired his pluck in running into manifest danger, and felt for him—that the fortunes of war had gone against him. Singularly enough, all this did not lessen his bitterness against Theodore Marshall. The lady might look at the thing in the proper light, but the man who had made him an object of commiseration, and of charity in the way of beef-tea and croquettes, would hear from him later. If he could only get out he would get to the bottom of all this tom-foolery! But he really could not show himself. Meanwhile the time hung heavily; it was a beastly place; he hated the slatternly chambermaid and the knowing-looking waiter. How much did they know? and how many, all together, knew about the affair?

Back at last in Morchester, McLean was still in a bad temper, and too short with people who asked him about his "trip." For reasons connected with politics he ought not to have been away, and when his political friends rallied him somewhat coarsely upon his absence he found it hard to keep his temper. Le Mark, shocked at McLean's infidelity to duty, was severe of aspect and cold in speech. It was some time

before the senator could find an opening to introduce the subject of Miss Ellerton's monetary resources. He was tolerably certain that Le Mark, if any one, could tell him what he wanted to know. That gentleman made it his business to assess for his own purposes the property of every one in Morchester that had enough money to be worth attention. It was a delicate inquiry, because Miss Plunkett was related to Le Mark, and there had been an understanding between the two men that McLean and Miss Constance were to make a match. But Le Mark was so full of the Park-Side Improvement Company and Mary's relation to it that he took it for granted that McLean was equally interested, and so, after a moment's hesitation, told all he had been able to gather. He had gathered a good deal, pieced together from bits picked up here and there, and he told more than he really knew. With his assertive habit he said at once:

"She is a rich woman, sir; she must be a very rich woman, but close as a trap. I cannot give you details, yet I am sure she has large means. Her father was an old fox; I find he was always accumulating, and spent very little. We must inform the young lady concerning our plans and show her that her interests and ours are identical."

McLean went from this interview with the sense of relief and exhilaration that comes from the clearing up of difficulties; the finding of a way out, and the birth of a new and pleasant expectation. He felt a cleaner and a more reputable man. It was as if a higher ambition, a better destiny, beckoned to him.

He liked himself—in his past—less than he had, and he believed that in the future he was to like himself more. To be sure he was still seeking money, but now in a direction in which his taste, his inclinations, if not his heart, led gaily on to a success worth winning or to a defeat in which there might be disaster but no shame. He was self-confident by nature; he had succeeded in his undertakings; he was clever, and he had experimented much with women. Why should he not succeed? It would be easy to find out what kind of man she liked, and to be that man. Certainly she was not a prude; she was a woman of the world, and he believed he could please her.

He had heard her say that she had a predilection for fringed gentian, such as many people have for a particular flower. He went to an encyclopædia and found that it might still be in bloom. Then he wrote to the postmaster of a country village, sending a money order for ten dollars and suggesting the posting of a notice offering five dollars for thirty stalks, fresh and in perfect order. The postmaster was to pack them and send them by mail, keeping what money remained to pay for his trouble. The flowers were punctually delivered—a mass of azure blooms—and went to the house in Washington Street, with McLean's card. Fringed gentian does not grow about Morchester; it was a graceful and striking attention, followed by many more, ingeniously planned, that no woman could fail to enjoy.

Mary first saw McLean, after her return, at an afternoon musicale. She had never seen him look so well. His manner was quieter than formerly, and he showed

her a deference that she had not noted before. She had written to thank him for the gentian; she thanked him again and did it cordially, for she loved the flower and liked the thoughtfulness of the deed. They had a few minutes together on a bench in the hall under the stairs. McLean made the most of his time. He dropped cynicism and his uncomfortable frankness of statement; he talked like a gentleman of nice appreciations, a man of cultivation and feeling. He was on his good behaviour, and really under some excitement—which always adds zest to a conversation, if it does not show itself in embarrassment—because of uncertainty whether he was beginning, handicapped by knowledge upon her part of his beating, or with no hampering facts, known to her, to hinder him in the pursuit of his object. He spoke of the meal he had taken in her cottage. Mary said it was so jolly to have people drop in in that haphazard manner—he on his way to the station, Mr. Marshall on his way home from a ride. She felt flattered to have had a call,—she understood that his journey was a flying one; he had not been again to Mrs. Netherby's?

"No," McLean said, "I did not get back there."

He did not dare to say that neither did he return immediately to Morchester, or to venture any further in trying to get information, he was so afraid of giving it.

The first meeting revealed no indication that he had lost ground in her esteem, and he left her feeling that he had made a good impression, elated by permission to call. He was prompt to avail himself of this privilege, and to do so as often thereafter as seemed wise.



He grew to be very much in earnest in this quest of beauty, intellect, and fortune, but he was a politician and his hopes of ultimate success were grounded upon his capacity for patience and the carrying out in detail of a carefully considered plan. He meant to gradually efface any unfavourable impressions that might have been created by his more reckless talk early in their acquaintance; to flatter her by confidences touching important affairs; to lead her to believe that she influenced him, that she aided him to clearer vision in matters of policy hard to adjust to a nice morality.

He did not go to her with bald compliments or suggestions of an admiration he dared not put into words. He sought her as one who by her mind and moral steadiness was able to help him. He seemed to talk to her to crystallise his own thoughts and to find sure grounds for his actions. He believed he was building up in her mind a reconstructed image of himself, made in the likeness of the man he conceived as her ideal, or at least of a man whom she could admire for his talents and respect for his character. Unfortunately for him he could not read her mind; it was less upon her sleeve than was her heart.

We are continually told, generally by women, that woman is unintelligible to man. To a certain extent this is true. There is a cleavage between the sexes similar to that which exists between races. People of Anglo-Saxon blood frankly own that Latins, the French, for instance, are past their comprehension; they live among Frenchmen for a generation without getting at their point of view. Not even their literature

reveals to us fully the mental attitude of Frenchmen. We see what they do; we cannot understand how their conduct can appear as it does to themselves. We get a notion of how the same thing is looked at by two different races only when some one, who is partly of both by birth or training, interprets one to the other, nor do we get a great deal of help here, for the dual mind sees as a man whose eyes have not both the same focus.

A difference of this character existed between Miss Ellerton and McLean. Their training had been too unlike, their habits of mind too dissimilar, to admit of mutual comprehension even if the matter of sex had not come in to baffle still further McLean's adroit intelligence. Moreover, the man was not making love in a straightforward way; he was trying to produce an image that had no verity in it; that could not reach the sensitive film in the shape he drew it, because it passed from the lens he was in the habit of using through another, the properties of which he understood not at all. We are much oftener fooled by the refraction due to the structure of our own minds than by the refraction of truth through the minds of others, which is one reason, it may be said incidentally, why it is better to read widely than to read only what we believe beforehand we shall be willing to approve.

Our ideals, our opinions, are rarely formed from one set of impressions. It was unfortunate for McLean that besides the concepts he presented to her, Mary Ellerton's mind had received others from her reading, from her own thinking, from Churchill, from Mr.

Netherby, from a thousand sources. She had the strength of a cultivated understanding. The brain is a storage battery of almost unlimited capacity. The impressions received there are converted into static energy. Every idea assimilated becomes a line of force. When some new conception is absorbed it must come into adjustment with the energy already existent. There is a rearrangement, another equilibrium. When the static energy becomes dynamic it acts as the resultant of few or many lines of force, according to the number and depth of the impressions that have been received. The geography of the moon described in twenty pages leaves an ordinary mortal with little or nothing that can be turned to intellectual use, although with an astronomer the case may be different; but twenty pages on the geography of the Mediterranean may invigorate a common man's understanding of history, art, religion, science, and so on. The politician addresses himself to the multitude. He takes a few ideas, mere party cries even, and by reiteration he hammers them into inert and meagrely furnished brains. They find storage there and become effective almost unmodified. Cultivated persons are not so easy to deal with.

McLean missed his cue in addressing himself too closely to Miss Ellerton's intelligence, although he was right in believing it to be more dominant than her emotions. Nevertheless, women are not won to love by approach through the head, and the clever senator might as well have saved his breath to cool his porridge, if he had only known it. He amused and interested the clever woman, but her heart was

enlisted against him in a war where strategy was important and even treachery might be contemplated—so strong was her partisanship.

Mary had been immensely interested in Mr. Netherby's exposition of his views upon politics. She knew one man from whom she would expect consistent uprightness of conduct. She had measured more accurately than could have been expected, from her slight contact with Marshall, the man's character and powers. She saw that he had clear notions of duty; that they marked a path for him from which nothing could prevail to turn him: he was morally steady and strong; he was simple and straightforward. She was learning that he was systematic in the conduct of business, clear-headed, direct of purpose, resourceful, and resolute. Mr. Netherby was right in the stress he laid upon the individual. Such men as Marshall—given enough of them—would insure the health of a state. She felt that if Marshall had a specific thing to do, he would, if it were doable, do it thoroughly and not leave it until it was done. Yet her estimate of his character did not explain her wrath when she learned from Mr. Netherby of new difficulties and dangers that were continually hedging him in and paralysing his efforts.

She thought of Margaret Lawrence, aloof from Marshall's life, from his more vital interests, serene in her womanly womanhood, ignoring, almost ignorant, of the game that was playing for stakes no less than a fortune, a career, the stamp of success or the brand of failure. How could Margaret with her tranquillity, her delicacy, her guarded life, from which

almost the rumour of the strenuous world was excluded, feel with or for the man who stood alone, fighting with shortening breath the ogres of his time, ogres personal and figurative—Le Mark, Garrison, McLean, and the rest; cunning, duplicity, corruption, the evil use of money, and of power based upon its own misuse? But if he loved Margaret he should have her, and take her not as consolation but as prize of victory. At least he should not be beaten, but appear, as he was, the better man, if any effort upon her part could keep him upon his feet.

Another man who claimed much of Mary's attention was Churchill. He came frequently to see her. He was becoming nervous; he had lost what balance he formerly had. He was evidently entrained in the currents of thought that flowed from *The Argus*. He attended meetings of working men and made speeches. He was burning with a sense of the general rottenness and of the miscarriage of justice, but he arrived nowhere, not even at the confidence of the men whose cause he meant to espouse. He did not know, indeed, precisely what their cause was. For most of them free silver was at the moment their notion of the means to attain social regeneration; a first step was higher wages, tolerably sure to come in an era of higher prices, due to cheapened currency. Here Churchill was at odds with them and ignorance is always intolerant of opposition to a pet theory. He was losing old friends and making no new ones. Mary became almost indispensable to him; he was always feverishly anxious to see her and desperately struggling to keep away from her. She liked him less than

formerly, but she could not very well deny him the door. Besides, she owed him something for good offices in the past, and through him she touched the world at points she would not otherwise have reached. Finally, from him she heard much of Marshall. She allowed him to come, still drifting to his fate.

## Chapter XXII

### A MEETING FOR THE PROMOTION OF A MUSEUM

If there is no parting in heaven, may we not also hope that there are no meetings—of committees?

AS the time approached for the November elections in the memorable year of '96, business came almost to a standstill. Marshall ran his mill to its full capacity until he could no longer sell his product, even at the cost of manufacture—without question of putting away money to meet his interest. Then it came to running only a single "turn"; there was no longer a possible profit. He was beaten by "the times." If he could hold on until after the elections, possibly the times would improve. If they did not, was he justified in further increasing his indebtedness? Certainly the times could not always be bad, but they must change soon if he was to save his property. It was not likely that his unknown backers would continue to supply money in indefinite quantities and for any length of time.

The elections came at last. The country pronounced for sound money. The lucky party had prevailed, and still the barque of trade hung in the wind. No man wishing to produce and sell could say that an improvement was noticeable. But the Dukes of Morchester breathed more freely; their candidates had

been elected; they felt politically strong; the making of money would follow. Their bread had been cast upon the waters; the tide had turned their way; they were looking for a hundredfold—backing their forecast by quietly buying while stocks were cheap.

Le Mark was flushed with the elation of victory. He had been one of a few to save the country; "the party" was in his debt; now or never for the museum and the Improvement Company! The arrangements for the loan exhibition were well towards completion; it was to open December 1st and to remain open for three weeks. The appeal to the City Council and to the public for a permanent museum should be made while interest in art was at concert pitch, under the stimulus of the exhibition of borrowed pictures.

Le Mark had a meeting at his house to plan a campaign. There were present Mrs. Netherby; Miss Ellerton; Mrs. Conduit, President of the Ladies' Culture Union; Miss Dantzig, Chairman of the Art Department of the Woman's League for Civic Advance; Mr. McLean; Mr. Flower, who was a member of the City Council, and Mr. Berry.

Le Mark called the meeting to order and, after a few phrases in which he dedicated the labours of the committee to the public he loved so well, proceeded straight to business.

"Ah, Mrs. Conduit, do you think your admirable organisation can undertake to have printed, addressed at your rooms, and sent out—say, ten thousand copies of a circular calling attention to the great utility of the museum, and announcing that it will be managed by a board, whose members will be chosen annually



by the contributing members of the Art Museum Association,—a subscription of one hundred dollars to entitle to life membership, an annual subscription of ten dollars to annual membership? That is the plan of organisation I propose; has any one any suggestions to offer? You all approve? Very well, then, we will delegate the distribution of the circulars to the Ladies' Culture Union.

"I would suggest, Mrs. Conduit, that we assume an existing organisation, temporary, if you please; that besides the general circular we send a notice of election to our Association and put the dues for membership at ten dollars yearly, as I before stated—one hundred dollars for life membership. If it would be any convenience to you I will draw up the circular and suggest a form for the announcement of election. Those who are in favour of this plan as outlined will please say Aye."

A murmur went round the circle. Le Mark resumed:

"The ayes have it. It is only by intelligent co-operation that we are able to achieve great results."

"Yes," Miss Dantzig said in an earnest voice, "I think co-operation is everything. We ought to co-operate all the time."

Le Mark passed to the next point.

"By the way, our first address to the public should be signed by a representative committee. The members should not be selected from a narrow circle, and it is most important that they should be persons of prominence—let us say from twelve to twenty names. As a representative of our great transportation

systems I suggest Mr. Garrison of the M. & L. E. I think Judge Somers should act. Mr. McLean, will you see Judge Somers?" McLean nodded. "I should like to get the name of Mr. Abram Sanbourne, or John Craft's, or, indeed, both. They are becoming, I may say they are, men of great influence in this community."

Miss Dantzig looked at Mrs. Conduit; her look was tentative, interrogatory. Mrs. Netherby saw it and responded:

"I quite agree with Mr. Le Mark. In public matters we must take broad ground. Both names would add strength to the committee, and we want it to be strong and representative."

Miss Dantzig said, "Certainly, it is always best to be representative."

"You are quite right, Miss Dantzig," Le Mark hastened to say. "We can make little civic advance without working with the actual forces of our time. We must turn these forces into useful channels, not ignore them. In a practical age we must be practical people. I think our senior senator from this State should join us; I will undertake to secure him myself. I am not quite sure, though, that I am the best person to invite the two gentlemen we were just talking about. How do you think they had better be approached, Mr. Flower?"

Mr. Flower was not quick to respond; he was evidently thinking hard. At last he said slowly:

"If you can interest Judge Somers, I guess he can tell you how you can reach Sanbourne and Craft. Can't you fix that, McLean?"

With a quick look toward Miss Ellerton, who did not seem to notice it, McLean said he thought there would be no difficulty about the gentlemen in question; he would undertake to respond for them; he was quite sure they would not mind "going upon" the committee if the matter was properly brought to their attention.

Le Mark referred to a slip of paper extracted from his vest pocket. "I am anxious to have Dr. Oliver Slade one of us. He is a very prominent man, one of the trustees of the College of Morchester, President of the Board of Charities, a man very much respected, but he is a little difficult to deal with sometimes. Has any one a suggestion to offer?"

There was a dead silence. McLean smiled, but said nothing. Some looked at the ceiling as if to find assistance there; others knit their brows, but no one brought forward a proposal. Finally Mr. Berry, who was sitting a little behind Le Mark, to the left, leaned over and said a few words to the chairman in a voice inaudible to the rest of the company. Le Mark leant to hear him, frowned at first, and then inarticulately assented by movements of his head. Presently Mr. Berry fell back and the chairman straightened up and addressed the meeting gravely.

"Mr. Berry has made an excellent suggestion. He thinks the matter can be arranged and I quite concur in his opinion. The next name I would propose is that of Dr. Lawrence, president of our great establishment for higher education. Mrs. Netherby——"

Mrs. Netherby interrupted. "I think Miss Ellerton is the proper person to see Dr. Lawrence. You

would not mind," turning to her friend, "this particular assignment?"

"I do not mind very much, but I am not at all sure you can depend upon me. However, I will try."

Le Mark referred to his paper again. "We want Bishop Babbington. Your husband is on the standing committee of the diocese, is he not, Mrs. Conduit? Will you answer for the Bishop?"

"Oh, there is no difficulty about the Bishop,"—cheerfully from Mrs. Conduit.

"Ah!" Le Mark ejaculated, folding his paper, "that is very satisfactory. Mrs. Netherby has a list of ladies to propose. It has been very carefully considered. I think it could not be better."

Mrs. Netherby took the floor. As Mrs. Conduit's name and that of the President of the Woman's League for Civic Advance were those first read out, no objections were made to the others, although at certain names the two official ladies exchanged glances.

"Now," said Mr. Le Mark, once more taking up the burden of leadership, "it will be gratifying to know that Miss Dantzig will call attention to the great importance of the museum at the next general meeting of the League and ask for a formal endorsement of our project; also for individual effort on the part of League members. The influence of the organisation she represents is far-reaching, and I am sure it can always be counted upon for the encouragement of a public improvement."

Miss Dantzig hastened to reply:

"The regular meeting of the Art Department is on the second Wednesday, that will be the eleventh, I

think, yes,—the eleventh,—and the general meeting comes the third Friday, the twentieth. The Art Department will have to act first, of course, and make a recommendation at the general meeting. The business coming before the League is so voluminous that the departments necessarily have to act first, unless business is referred by the League to the departments, when, of course, the departments have to report to the League. I think I may have to get some one else to bring the matter up in my department, because I shall be in the chair, but, as chairman of the Art Department I can make a recommendation to the League, I do not see that there is a necessity for conference with other departments, although, personally, I am always ready to confer."

"That will do admirably, Miss Dantzig," Le Mark remarked, with a tone of appreciation. "I think we have gone pretty well over the ground for a preliminary meeting. Shall we adjourn pending a call from the chair? Ah, very well, if that is the consensus of opinion."

He rose; all rose. Le Mark pressed the hands of Mrs. Conduit and Miss Dantzig, thanking them, with a reference to his personal obligation, and escorted them to the front door. Mrs. Netherby and Miss Ellerton were at the door of the library on their way out when Le Mark met them and asked for a little more of their time. They went back with their host and found the other gentlemen waiting.

The proceedings were now more informal. The main question was the appropriation from Council for building the museum. Le Mark was tolerably sure

of the Board of Estimates and the Mayor, but it was still uncertain whether the Council could be depended upon. Mr. Flower aspired to a reputation for interest in education and in civic progress; he was to lead the forces enlisted in behalf of the museum. He and Mr. Berry were present to take part in a council of war. The ladies had been detained for a moment by Le Mark that there might be no misunderstanding about the opening of the loan exhibition.

The Industrial Arts Exposition Building had been secured as a place in which to show the pictures. Its main hall was big enough to admit of seating a large number of people in chairs occupying the central part of the room and leaving a wide aisle all along the walls. The programme called for an afternoon gathering to which all were invited that in any way might be useful in establishing the home of art—councilmen and their friends, as many as might choose to come, newspaper people, and rich and liberal citizens selected as possible contributors to the building fund. There were to be a few short addresses and finally some remarks by the Mayor, who would touch a key turning on the electric lights before the pictures and declare the exhibition open. Attendants would then carry off the chairs, giving the persons present an opportunity to view the canvases.

From 8.30 to 11.30 the same evening there was to be a general reception, for which some thousands of invitations had been issued. There were to be patronesses, receiving in full dress. Mrs. Netherby, as the leading lady of this band, was to be coached by Mr. Berry, one of a number of gentlemen ushers,

about political people not known to McLean, who was also to be on hand for special service. It was desirable that all these little arrangements should be thoroughly understood by the parties to them. After a conference of fifteen minutes no one present could think of anything that had not been foreseen, and the ladies were allowed to withdraw.

The men, left to themselves, went to work at once. We shall not follow their labours in detail; they involved the scrutiny of a list of councilmen. Some names were checked off as safe; some as hopeless. Then one by one those remaining were considered in the most painstaking way. . Each man's business, his circumstances, his record, his expectations, were discussed, and search made for a means of influencing him. This search often led to some one else who owned or controlled a particular father of the city, and the matter of moment then was how to command the interest of the man who owned the actual voter.

It is by such diligence, aided by perspicacity in discerning each man's moral eccentricities, that results are obtained from legislative bodies. It is to be admitted that there are men open to a bribe, given and taken with brutal frankness, but most men have some sort of moral standards or predispositions. These sensibilities must not be offended; a little delicacy is needed. There is a world of difference between the barren simplicity of a straight line and the fascinating curves of indirection.

In a general way it is probably safe to assume that practical men seeking results do not commonly make their appeal only to a sense of obligation to the public.

They are not unmindful of this argument,—it is the wrapping-paper in which other parcels are done up,—but neither do they neglect to find out the weaknesses of the man they want to persuade; to discover his personal interests, and how to appeal to them. Our friends in Mr. Le Mark's library were eminently practical men, and, wearisome and delicate as was their task, they applied themselves to it with the assiduity of men who had learned well the great lesson that results are not to be achieved without effort.

Mrs. Netherby had a tolerably correct notion of what was going on in the room they had just left, and she gave Mary Ellerton the benefit of her experience.

"My dear, is not Le Mark wonderful? The gall of the man! He is a complete meeting in himself; opens with prayer, puts motions, carries them, adjourns, and closes with a benediction at the front door. I wonder how much our colleagues think they co-operated. They"—she meant the men in the library—"are going over the councilmen now. This is the way: Jones, Twenty-first Ward, plumber, has voted consistently with the gas-ring gang; must be detached. Big plumbing job at Æsculapius Hospital; Taintor is chairman of the Committee on Buildings; he is a good fellow; he must be got to see Jones. If he objects, McLean must see Taintor and have a little talk about the needs of the hospital. Taintor sees he must see Jones or the hospital will get a reduced appropriation next year from the Legislature. Next man, Perkins, grocer, Tenth Ward, and so on."

Mrs. Netherby laughed at the expression on her



friend's face. She said, "Is n't it awful? We are going to have our museum, though, and you are one of the beautiful pillars thereof. You won't come home with me and have a cup of tea? Then, *au revoir*."

When Mary Ellerton entered the dim drawing-room of her aunt's house she crossed to the chimney-piece to ring for tea. Churchill, who was waiting for her, came quickly forward with—

"Let me do it, please."

Mary was a little tired, and vexed at finding the young man there, as if he had rights in the house. She said:

"What! Are you here?"

"Yes; do you mind my waiting? It is three days since I have seen you."

"Well, do you think friendship cannot stand such a strain?"

"I don't quite catch your meaning."

"Do you think I shall forget you if you don't see me for three days?"

"I don't think it is so much a question of your forgetting me as of my need to see you."

"I don't know why you need to see me. I am not a lawyer nor a physician. Perhaps you need a cup of tea. I can give you one presently."

Churchill had been standing by the fireplace; he walked toward the window, evidently agitated. Then he came quickly back, and with a sudden motion took her hand and kissed it. Mary rose from her chair, hot with anger, but before she found her voice the butler brought in tea. As he set down the tray she said:

"Good-bye, Mr. Churchill. Johnson, help Mr. Churchill on with his overcoat."

Johnson held the portière aside and Churchill passed out without a word. Mary made her tea. As she lifted the cup her hand trembled slightly; she was still very angry.

The next morning's post brought her a letter from Churchill, the fool. It was a too contrite apology for his act of the evening before and an appeal for forgiveness—that he might have again his old footing upon any conditions. He must see her; it was indispensable; he could not live without seeing her. If she knew what he suffered!—and more of the like. But he did not say, "I love you; will you marry me?" Mary did not answer. She saw no more of her lover until the night of the reception on the occasion of the opening of the loan exhibition.

For two days Churchill was like a man demented; he had a crisis of nerves, such as comes at times to persons of irregular habits and morbid minds. It left him listless and benumbed, almost indifferent, in a mood that made his passion of a few hours before seem slightly grotesque. He wrote another letter, which was temperate and carefully worded. He said that he had lately been under great excitement; that certain personal troubles had thrown him off his balance. He hoped to be forgiven for an indiscretion that might possibly have appeared less flagrant if he had had an opportunity to speak at the time. He fully recognised that their relations had not been such as to warrant his action. He would like to say, however, that he valued Miss Ellerton's friendship,

her good opinion, more than she could believe. He pledged his honour that if she would consent to see him again she would find that he was entirely to be trusted. His former letter, written immediately after leaving her, when he was still mentally very much confused, he begged her to destroy, and to forget it if possible. He trusted that she would not continue to refuse to see him.

Mary answered: "I think you make a mistake in not going out more and seeing more of the people that would naturally be your friends. I shall be at the reception on Friday evening in the I. A. E. Building. Mrs. Netherby and I shall both be among those who receive. You can see us there."

## Chapter XXIII

### CHURCHILL APPEARS IN A NEW LIGHT

If one has no other virtue, it is something to be able to accept without indecent outcry the consequences of past perversities.

THE pictures of the loan exhibition were shown in a building made up of a large rectangular hall, with narrower and parallel rooms upon the longer sides. In one of these the patronesses received; a light refreshment was served in the other. The paintings were for the most part in the central bay, from which four doors, one near each end on either side, admitted to the reception and refreshment rooms. The guests entered the main hall by the great doors, passed to the right to make a bow to the patronesses, and then on to the pictures, by the upper door.

It was about half after nine when Churchill arrived. He knew that to see Mary Ellerton he would have to see a number of people by whom he was not particularly beloved. He was still greatly depressed; he did not very much care what happened. He was worn out with self-torment, and had come only because, under the circumstances, he could not help it. He meant to say a few words and get away quickly.

The reception room was well filled. The motion towards the patronesses, who stood half-way up on

the right, was slow. Persons to whom the social side of the reception was important lingered to talk with friends, and there were many who showed no burning zeal for art. A dozen ladies were receiving. Among them Churchill saw Mrs. Netherby, Mrs. Lawrence, two or three others whom he knew, Leonora Le Mark, and Mary Ellerton. Le Mark was there, of course—very much in evidence. McLean, behind Miss Ellerton, bent now and then to speak to her after glancing down the room. He appeared to be informing her about new-comers as they came into view in the crowd to their left.

Churchill advanced with the throng. He was pale and looked ill, but he carried himself erectly. He was bored, and had a strange sensation of something impending, although there was no reason to expect any occurrence out of the common—a bow, a few conventional words, was all that could be demanded. Mrs. Netherby gave him her hand and rallied him cheerfully upon his desertion of old friends. He stood before her until the crowd pressed a little behind him and then moved forward a step to speak to Miss Ellerton, who had already acknowledged his bow. Le Mark and McLean were looking at him as if he was an unwholesome person from whom women should be protected; as if every moment they meant to come between him and innocent persons who could not be expected to know the depths of his depravity.

Mary Ellerton had seen Churchill as he came up the room, and but a few steps behind him she had seen another face that for a moment brought a flush to her own. It was that of a woman on the arm of a

dark, spare man who had not a pleasant expression. He seemed to have a purpose, and to be bent upon executing it—drawing with him, against her will, the scared woman at his side. She was not unattractive in appearance. Both she and her companion were correctly dressed for the occasion, but they looked out of place, more, perhaps, from the somewhat tragic expression of their faces than for other reasons.

Besides Mr. Berry, who only occasionally acted, and then most modestly, there were a number of men near the patronesses, who as a rule mentioned the names of guests not known to these ladies; but no one spoke to or for the dark man and the unhappy little woman with him. These two had just reached Mrs. Netherby, and Churchill had at that moment put out his hand to take Mary's, looking at her, careless of who saw him, as a man looks who loves, when he felt a firm hand on his arm.

Other people had noticed the man that had eagerly, if not rather rudely, caught up with Churchill, and they had noticed the distressed face of the young person that clung to his arm. There was a lull in the din of voices; a movement of curiosity. An instinctive sense of something happening directed all eyes, for a wide radius, upon the group of three before Mrs. Netherby. As Churchill turned at the pressure of the man's grasp, some thirty persons, probably, heard the clear, low-toned voice that said:

"Russell, will you present us?"

Mary saw in one instant, as though naked, the soul of the one man that loved her because he could not help it,—a soul out of joint with the times, with the

world he lived in, with fundamental conditions of his life. She read, first, surprise, disgust, bitterness; then a new purpose, and a self-command similar to that of a man who walks composedly onto the hangman's trap. When Churchill spoke, after a pause in which one might have counted a half-dozen pulse-beats, his voice was steady, well pitched, and full of courtesy.

"By all means, my dear Fergus. Mrs. Netherby, permit me to present Mrs. Churchill, my wife; Mr. Fergus Frank, my brother-in-law." He took Frank's place beside his wife. "Miss Ellerton, let me present my wife; Mr. Frank, Miss Ellerton."

He lifted his head and met steadily the eyes of the intensely interested women and the cynically smiling men. McLean fingered his moustache as if to hide his amusement. Le Mark turned on his heel with an ejaculation that seemed to call Heaven to witness how clearly and indisputably he, Le Mark, was always in the right, and how all who failed to agree with him were sure to be brought to confusion. Mrs. Netherby was for once embarrassed; her eyes moved restlessly.

Mary alone was prepared, for she had recognised the woman seen behind the palm in the roof garden in Madison Square, and it was flashed in upon her mind that it was Churchill the woman had claimed as her husband. Conviction that the claim was just came to her at the same moment. She took one step forward and spoke to Mrs. Churchill easily, naturally, as if nothing whatever had occurred that was in the least unusual. Mrs. Netherby took the cue; she was naturally kind-hearted. She said something lightly

to Frank, shook Mrs. Churchill by the hand, and said:

"Your husband and I are old friends, but I did not know he was so fortunate. He must come to see me and tell me all about it."

Mary said, "You will let me know to-morrow where to find you; I want to see you."

That was all. Churchill bowed. Mrs. Churchill murmured a broken phrase, and Mary's lover passed on—his wife upon his arm.

A moment later, in a pause in her receiving, Mrs. Netherby enveloped Mary in a wide-eyed stare of astonishment. She converted herself into a living exclamation point. She said:

"Did you know about the wife?"

Mary shook her head.

"Well, you were mighty cool about it."

"Why not?" Mary said, laughing.

"Such a *coup de théâtre*, my dear, I never expected to witness. Where do you suppose he has been keeping her? the villain!"

Mary shook her head again, and Mrs. Netherby returned to her duties.

McLean had wandered off. He presently came upon a man named Latimer Powell, whose vocation was tattling. Powell was not born to great things of any sort, but he was born into the society of Morchester. He made a little income from this accident by communicating to the newspapers descriptions of women's dresses, announcements of their teas, of balls, dinners, theatre parties, and so on. People who wanted their gowns or their parties noticed in the



papers invited Powell to their houses and sometimes mentioned to him circumstances or conjectures about their friends that had the flavour of scandal. Powell was a clearing-house for rumours, questionable anecdotes, suspicions, and pungent reports. When he was not employed as a tattler he was available as a sink—one that discharged upon the front lawn, under drawing-room windows. This epicaridan had already got wind of a sensation, although he was in the refreshment room talking to the caterer when Churchill was readjusting his position in society. He, the epicaridan, met McLean and buttonholed him.

"What is this about Churchill?"

McLean shrugged his shoulders. "You had better ask Frank."

"I say, tell me what happened. What! Fergus Frank?"

"Yes, Churchill was in the act of making his salutations to the patronesses when Frank caught him from behind and made him present an unfortunate little woman as his wife, and Frank as his brother-in-law; made him present the woman to Miss Ellerton as his wife, before all Morchester—to the lady at whose feet he has been whining like a hound for a year or more."

"By gad! you don't say so! Who was the woman?"

"Fergus Frank's sister. Churchill will have to marry her now—for sure—or Frank will know the reason why."

"Good Lord! The virtuous Churchill! By the way, there was a rumour of this some time ago, if I remember."

"I believe there was. It was whispered that the exhorting reformer of Morchester had a quiet establishment of his own in New York. Churchill and his chum, Marshall, did more blustering about the story than would have been necessary if there had been nothing to cover."

"You think Frank can make him marry her?"

"Well, what do you think? A man with the nerve to plan and carry out the stroke of this evening will bring Churchill to book—easy enough."

"Was Churchill taken by surprise?"

"Surprised! he was hypnotised; he said what Frank put in his mouth, as if he had no will of his own. He called the woman his wife before the whole town,—introduced her formally as his wife; he is a goner."

"Carrambo! I wish I had been there."

"You should have been; the thing was quite in your line."

McLean strolled down the room again, signalled to Mr. Berry, had a three-minutes' talk with him, and rejoined the group about the patronesses. Mr. Berry permitted himself to be interviewed by a number of newspaper men in the next half-hour, and left them all smiling—busy with their note-books.

Later, McLean and Miss Constance Plunkett had a five-minutes' chat on the subject of Mrs. Churchill's *début* that almost brought them together again. This was the sort of thing they could talk about with mutual understandings; they were both very witty about it.

Mrs. Bob Griswold was one of those who had witnessed the scene, but she evaded discussing it; she

wanted time for her ideas to clear. As for Bob G. himself, he remembered Churchill's excesses at Mrs. Netherby's dinner at "The Farm," and felt that society was safer now that a dangerous man was unmasked, and revealed as in close association with the enemies of social order. He was bothered that he could not find words to express his convictions, but he knew he would get around to that in time by keeping his ears open; meanwhile he did a lot of ejaculating. Delaney Plunkett might have helped him out a little if he had been present. He was not; there were enough pictures in a hand of cards to serve Delaney's turn, if the deal was lucky. He was tempting fortune at his club that evening.

There were people in the society of Morchester, as in that of every other considerable place, to whom social success was an aim towards which they struggled, trampling upon certain delicacies, old notions of decency and morality, if these seemed incompatible with the tone they conceived to be significant of the highest fashion,—the tone, the atmosphere, of some other society they were bent upon imitating. But most of Morchester's well-to-do people—people of unquestioned position—were simple and virtuous at bottom. They were most of them influenced a little by increasing luxury and artificiality, as was natural in view of the increased wealth of the period following the Civil War, yet nowhere could there have been found a society containing more persons of correct habits and useful lives. Almost every man or woman of importance gave of time, money, or experience, or of all, to nourish charities, foster education,

or assist some organised effort planned for the public good. Men who were remorselessly building fortunes from the *débris* of wealth they found means to disintegrate, turned aside to do a handsome thing for actual poverty. Le Mark was exceptional in that he made philanthropy dovetail with money-making; he was not alone in sacrificing to the political Baal in the hope of aid for philanthropy.

Many kindly people who had seen or heard at first hand of the Churchill incident went home from the reception a little pained and shocked—more sorry for Churchill than eager to flout him. Dr. and Mrs. Lawrence, under their own roof again, sat for a moment in their dining-room to drink a glass of water before going up-stairs. Mrs. Lawrence said:

"Husband, dear, it was terrible; it was plainly absolutely unexpected to Churchill. I stepped back that he should not have to prolong the agony. However much he may have been to blame, he behaved like a gentleman. I want you to have a talk with him and see if you can help him."

Dr. Lawrence said that he meant to do so.

When Churchill walked away from the patronesses with his wife upon his arm, he felt profoundly humiliated, not so much by the fact of publishing his marriage as at the extraordinary means by which publicity had been forced upon him. As he moved down the room he felt as if he were stripped, indecently exhibited—and there was absolutely no escape. He walked slowly like a man infirm. The first thing to take his attention from himself was the trembling of the hand upon his sleeve. He looked down at the

white face, drawn with effort at composure, and said kindly:

"Be brave, little Em. This is rather hard upon you; we will get away as quickly as we can."

They passed into the main hall and tried to lose themselves in the crowd. They stopped once or twice with a pretence of looking at pictures, and then—on towards the door. In the vestibule they met Fergus, who had already got his hat and coat. While Emma was in the women's dressing-room Fergus said to Churchill:

"I have a carriage waiting; I want you for an hour or two on a matter of importance to you and to your wife, after that—as you like."

Churchill made no protest. He was willing, apparently, to let Frank play his game out. Frank said to the driver, "The Hosmer House," and in the carriage explained that he had taken rooms there for Emma under her married name; that he needed Churchill for pressing business that must be attended to that night. Still Churchill made no response; he sat silent beside Emma, holding her hand in his. All three went into the hotel, which was a small but comfortable place chiefly used by persons living there from month to month. After seeing Emma into the lift, Frank introduced Churchill to the clerk as his brother-in-law, and asked that iced water be sent to Mrs. Churchill's apartment. The two men went out together. They drove to Frank's rooms, where he collected some papers, and from there to the offices of the newspapers.

They saw the night editors, one after another, and

explained that Churchill had been married to Miss Frank three years before; that because it was necessary for Mrs. Churchill to live with her mother, who was an invalid and could not be moved from New York, while Churchill's interests were in Morchester, Mr. and Mrs. Churchill had lately not lived together. The fact of the marriage had not been generally known in Morchester. Churchill had introduced his wife at the loan exhibition that evening. This incident had excited unnecessary comment. There was nothing upon which to base scandal, and there must be no scandal. In every instance Fergus showed the marriage certificate, warned the editors against publishing reporters' copy that was not in accordance with the facts, and left a memorandum of dates and of points in the history of the affair from which a little romance could be constructed if an editor saw fit.

It was after twelve o'clock when this round was finished. As they came to the street for the last time, Churchill stepped into the carriage mechanically, as from force of habit. Frank handed the driver a bank-note and walked away. The driver leaned over from the box and tapped the sash with his whip.

"Where to, sir?"

Churchill started slightly. He answered,

"To the Hosmer House."

## Chapter XXIV

### AN EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF A DILETTANTE

“On ne badine pas avec l'amour.”

RUSSELL CHURCHILL finished his studies at the College of Morchester in 1891. He had a fair income for a single man, and his somewhat studious inclinations naturally led him to travel. He went to Paris, attended lectures in a desultory fashion at the Sorbonne,—primarily as a means of improving his French,—and made expeditions to provincial places as fancy led him. He had no definite scheme of life, no particular purpose. His tastes gave him many interests, and though he travelled intelligently, as a student rather than for mere amusement, there was no one subject that fixed his attention.

From France he went to Berlin and studied German diligently for the greater part of a year, again attending lectures, for two semesters. Then he travelled slowly south and, in 1893, met in a train, between Buda Pesth and Vienna, Fergus and Emma Frank. They were young, attractive in appearance, and they were Americans. Fergus was in many ways more of a scholar than Churchill; he was incomparably his superior in the history of art and in artistic perception; he made a serious avocation of his studies in

architecture, sculpture, and painting. In their first conversation this was patent to Churchill, and he was the more interested because Fergus told him at once that he was a lawyer in Morchester, not an artist.

The fact that the two young men had lived in the same place, although unknown to each other, was another step towards acquaintance. Churchill took it for granted that the sister was also of Morchester. He learned only that she had lately come from a school on the Hudson, the name of which he thought he had heard. They parted after a pleasant day as the chance acquaintances of a journey.

A day or two later, Churchill, dining in the court of his hotel, saw Fergus and his sister at another table. He joined them for his coffee and cigar, and they sat together for an hour listening to the Hungarian band, playing national music as it is only played by Hungarian gypsies. This time their meeting led to an engagement for the next day. Other appointments followed, and a few days later, when the Franks went on, it was understood that Churchill was to meet them in Venice.

Churchill was strongly attracted by Fergus, with whom he had found many points of contact, and he felt for Emma the interest that is apt to develop on the part of an expansive young man thrown with a pretty girl who accepts with evident pleasure his courtesies and attentions.

Certain men cannot help lending to a devotion of this kind, when they see that it is making an impression, a constantly increasing significance. It may or may not mean love, and what it means to the woman



depends so much upon her experience that it is not easy for the man to know how seriously it is taken.

Churchill meant little; Emma was experiencing for the first time the satisfaction of receiving from a gentleman the marked attention that is the atmosphere in which not a few women live, thinking no more of it than of the air about them. If the truth were told, Emma had never known a gentleman before, unless we except her brother, who by no means had Churchill's social graces.

Venice is a dangerous place for those who do not wish to fall in love, or ought not to do so, to *badiner* with that emotion. It was there that Churchill began to feel a softening of the heart that was not love but its ghost. It lent an earnestness to his manner that made Emma a little more reserved—much to her advantage—and set her heart to beating. Yet here these two might have finally separated with no harm done. They parted at the end of ten days in Venice to meet again in Rome; in Rome, to meet on the Riviera.

Churchill had gone as far as he wished or intended to go, but the power of pleasing greatly is alluring. By insensible degrees he drifted into a relationship of a delicate character—about which there was no mutual understanding—that began to tell upon the nerves. To make matters worse, Churchill had early in the acquaintance formed the habit of reserving for occasions, when Fergus was not looking, tricks of voice and of the eyes that poor little Emma could hardly be expected to take at his valuation.

Churchill's conscience, like a thin sheet of india-rubber, was yielding yet resistant to a gentle prod,

but sure to suffer direfully when stabbed with force. The day came when the knife pierced and made a large wound.

They had all been staying at Mentone, basking in the sun on the benches of the Promenade du Midi, walking to Cap Martin, or making excursions into the hills to visit absurd little villages perched on eminences, most inconvenient of access, where still lived the descendants of people who fled to the heights to escape Saracen pirates. They had rowed out into the ever-blue sea far enough to overlook the nearer hills and catch glimpses of the Maritime Alps, bearing snow-fields on rugged shoulders, and rising before them as in a transformation scene of an opera. They had spent afternoons at Monte Carlo, watching the tables and drinking coffee on the terrace. Late one brilliant morning they started to drive to Nice. It was all opera—the vivid colouring; the wayside wine-shop before which they sat at a little table in the open; the conventional picturesqueness of the scenery; the peasants' costumes. They seemed to themselves to be players, acting their parts in this wonderful setting.

As the dusk began to deepen and some miles were yet to be covered, Fergus, restless and solicitous, mounted the box, beside the driver, and Emma and Churchill, left together on the only comfortable seat of the open carriage, leaned back and were silent. That drive was the climax of a hundred experiences appealing to the senses. They had been living far from the realities of life in Morchester or elsewhere, in a world whose natural beauty, even, had in it a hint of artificiality.

As dusk grew to dark and the stars first fluttered above like tinsel flecks, then slowly kindled in the velvet sky, Emma experienced the lassitude of a reaction from nervous excitement. She was vaguely, pensively happy, living in the moment, and yielding to all its impressions.

Some minutes passed with nothing said. Emma's mood was changing; she felt tears coming. With a little motion of impatience she shut her hand and then let it fall to the seat beside her. In doing so it touched Churchill's. He yielded to an impulse that afterwards seemed ludicrously in keeping with that theatrical day: he covered her hand with his. Emma made a movement of resistance. Not to be too easily rebuffed, Churchill pressed more firmly; the hand he held relaxed and yielded, and, with a sigh that was half a sob, Emma sat up more erectly and turned her face away. Churchill saw that she was quivering. At once a great remorse and a great pity overwhelmed him. It was instantly plain to him that he had behaved atrociously; that he could never respect himself if he should throw over this girl after using their intimacy, the place, the circumstances, the night, to betray her as he had; and still he could not fully accept the idea of an engagement.

If Churchill had been made of stiffer timber all this would not have happened. He was weak, and subject to emotion. A wave of tenderness for the little woman he had treated so badly almost persuaded him that he did love her. He asked himself if it could be that he did. Was it not probable that love came in this way? Possibly the great passions of poetry and

fiction were too rare to be for him. He certainly had a heartache for Emma, a deep feeling of sympathy, a strong desire to take her in his arms and comfort her. He found it beyond him to speak, but a pressure on the hand he continued to hold answered for words, and Emma sank back and shut her eyes.

After half an hour they came into Nice and drew up at their hotel. While Fergus settled with the coachman, Emma and Churchill stood aside and waited. The girl looked up and timidly but trustingly said:

"You will tell Fergus to-night?"

They stood in a half light; a flickering lamp lit Churchill's face at the moment the question was asked. Something the girl saw—surprise, indecision, some questioning—went to her heart like a bullet. It came to her that Churchill had not meant to be taken as she had thought. With a woful little moan she tottered and fainted dead away. The man who had so hurt her saved her from falling upon the pavement. Fergus came quickly to them; he carried his sister to a bench in the garden hard by, and Churchill went for water. The girl was revived in a few moments and asked very quietly to be taken to her room; she was tired; this was all she said. Churchill saw her no more for two days. That night in a fit of remorse, moved by what he believed to be duty, by profound contempt for himself and by an eager desire to satisfy his self-esteem; he told Frank that he loved Emma and wished to marry her. To the inquiry whether he had reason to believe that she cared for him, he had no answer to make except that he ear-

nestly hoped so. He could not betray the girl to another; it was bad enough to have brought her to self-betrayal before a man whose love she could doubt.

Fergus was none too well pleased at the turn Emma's affairs had taken. He was not overconfident of Churchill's integrity of purpose in love or in anything, and he was shrewd enough to know that Emma alone with him in Europe was not Emma in her own setting at home. Like the determined man he was, he preferred to face difficulties at once rather than to defer meeting them, however unpleasant the moment might be.

He told Churchill his father's history, made plain the nature of his business, his lack of education. He let it be understood that his mother had changed less with growing fortune than his father—that she was a confirmed invalid. She was a Catholic and he had himself been brought up in that faith. Emma had not; her father, who was not a Catholic, had claimed her in fulfilment of a compact and had educated her in Protestant schools.

Everything had been done for Emma that the father, with abundant money but meagre knowledge, knew how to do. She was a good girl, somewhat foolishly instructed, but sound at heart. She naturally felt the difference between her surroundings in the family life and those of girls she had known at school. She was sensitive because she was loyal, rather than because of the pride that is too easily wounded. Did Churchill feel, knowing these facts, that he wished to undertake all the responsibilities

of the proposed relationship—obligations that, once assumed, he could not ignore without cruelty to Emma?

Fergus did not mince matters; he was explicit and direct. He pointed out that if there were any reservations the time to acknowledge them was then. A bruised heart was not so much to be dreaded as a crippled life. The affair was unfortunate, but it could be lived down; an unhappy marriage never could. Churchill was obstinate as well as weak; he protested much, more than was honest. Fergus was troubled with misgivings, anxious about Emma; he regretted that he had not been more alert.

After two uncomfortable days, in which each man hated to meet the other, Emma reappeared and Churchill was allowed to see her alone. To overcome her mortification, to convince her, was the hardest task to which Churchill had ever addressed his facile tongue. She would not consent to an engagement; he would have her promise; and before a week had passed he had won—somewhat treacherously, but with a brave show of faith, for his own arguments had for the time convinced himself. He gave her a ring, and three months later there was a barbaric wedding, at which the invited were all friends of the bride's family. Fergus was keen enough to see that Churchill's world and that of his own people could not be amalgamated, and he was clever enough to prevent an attempt to make them coalesce.

The same motive that led the elder Frank to establish his son away from early associations—that he might have no hindrances in lifting himself to a new level—made him ready to give his daughter to a

gentleman, who would lift her also to levels that he knew very well neither he nor his wife could ever attain, for all his money and practical sagacity.

It was agreed that the young people should live abroad for a year; that later Emma should be taken to Morchester as a wife Churchill had met and won abroad. The year was but half out when Frank, the elder, died, and his wife's health failed so rapidly that Emma was summoned.

Before the honeymoon was over the girl knew that an error had been made; that a man, whose honour had permitted him to fool her, had married her, with skin-deep love, to bolster that honour. She gave her life to her mother and let her husband go. She was not so lacking in common sense as not to know that for Churchill to live over the shop in Sixth Avenue, in the old apartment that Mrs. Frank would not leave, was quite impracticable. She would not drag him down. Her love was little to him; it was everything to the paralytic mother. Let him live his life: hers would be what it might be.

At first, after again settling himself in Morchester, Churchill went once a week to New York and wrote occasional letters. But visits and letters became less and less frequent; the sense of obligation waned; it was not every day that he remembered that he was married. To Emma her marriage was a mystery that oppressed her the more the longer she dwelt upon it. She rarely left her mother except for necessary errands. She saw no one except those who came to the house in continuance of habits belonging to days when her father was living. Mrs. Frank had insisted

upon her going to the Garden on the night Mary Ellerton had seen her there, with neighbours whose presence was suffocating to a girl who had seen at least a corner of a world to which they had no access.

Fergus deplored—he could not prevent—the mischief he had foreseen. He had fathomed Churchill; he knew that the man had a conscience, that he would shrink from the guilt of vulgar infidelity. He watched his brother-in-law, and saw with profound inquietude the growth of his attachment to Miss Ellerton. He could not see that anything was likely to come of it except greater estrangement from Emma. Churchill was impossible as a bigamist; Miss Ellerton was impossible in any part that was degrading. Nevertheless, Churchill was tempting Providence, and Providence has curious ways of bringing the froward to book.

Two days before the reception at the museum, Fergus had written asking for a meeting on Friday evening. Churchill had put him off, saying, with a recklessness that was one of the elements of his character, that he had a positive engagement to meet Miss Ellerton at the reception. Fergus was angry; his sensibilities of birth were touched. He resolved to bring his sister over and force a public recognition of her claims. If he found Churchill with the lady he chose to trifle with, so much the better. An end must be put to concealment.

Mrs. Frank had been failing rapidly; she could not live many weeks; indeed, she was so ill that Emma's absence for twenty-four hours would hardly be noticed. Fergus encountered less resistance than he ex-



pected, less than he would have met if he had fully revealed his plan. He proposed that Emma should go to Morchester, and with him to the reception, which was of such a character that she could see much without necessarily meeting any one. It did not occur to him that his sister might know of Churchill's pursuit of Miss Ellerton, and he told her nothing. The approach to the patronesses immediately behind Churchill was an accident; an opportunity seized with Fergus's wonted quickness of perception, his accustomed resoluteness in action.

Emma wanted to see Miss Ellerton, and this secret desire had much to do with her assent to Fergus's proposal. When, as they went up the room, she saw Churchill before them and realised that Fergus was trying to overtake him, she was aghast, but, swept on by a strong will bent upon a defined purpose, she was helpless. In the moment of trial her whole strength was given to maintaining her self-command; to avoiding a scene as far as she might. She had her pride, also, poor child! and she would have died rather than collapse before the world that stood between her and her husband.

On reaching her room at the hotel she was still dazed by what she had so suddenly been forced to meet. Not enough time had elapsed to admit of an adjustment of ideas. She threw herself upon a sofa and tried to arrange the facts, to arrive at their purport. It came to her that she had to face a crisis. She did not regret it; she had suffered long enough, with a wound that mortified and sapped the bases of her life. She was ready for any readjustment that

would abolish the status of the last two years: divorce; an accommodation, permitting her to appear as a wife, if only in name; or she was willing to assume the duties due to a husband and to stifle the personal pride that had warped all her relations with the man who had hurt her so bitterly.

So Churchill found her. His mind also had been concentrated upon the unlooked-for crisis. At last he saw himself as we appear to the inner eye only when we are found out, and all our defences of secrecy and sophistry are sponged away with one sweep of the arm of destiny. There were no more wrestlings of conscience; there was no longer an option. He was cornered; there was no escape; he threw up his hands. He saw himself for the trimmer he was. What business had he with Miss Ellerton? Was she a woman to take a lover or wait for a man to divorce an ill-used wife? What monstrous folly to have philandered about this exquisite woman, with tentative, disloyal, cowardly, love-making, hinting at what he dared not say, chancing it whether by some accident she might not care for him—to learn that he had nothing to offer her but illicit relationships! He was revolted by this vision of himself, by his manner of life, by the flagrant insincerities of his unstable soul. He was humbled, contrite, unselfish at last; that is, he was ready to determine his acts by their import to others rather than to himself. He said to Emma:

“Fergus did well to-night. It is time you should be my wife in fact. You are a better woman, little Emma, than I deserve, but I will try to be more worthy of you. You are first with me now, if you

will have it so, and I shall not care for anything so much as to do absolutely right by you. It is you and I now, if you agree, and nothing on earth shall come between us."

The next morning Churchill took his wife to New York, where he spent two days in each week until after her mother's funeral. He did not live in Sixth Avenue, but he was much with Emma, and stood by to help and comfort her in the sad time that saw the burial of all her early associations.

Mary Ellerton did not see Mrs. Churchill until months had passed, and Dr. Lawrence had nothing to say when at last Churchill went to talk with him, except that he advised a definite and regular occupation, with long hours and plenty of detail, say, in Marshall's mill.

## Chapter XXV

### CHURCHILL TALKS AND FANNY LAWRENCE PUTS IN HER OAR

Children are little savages in that they seek, and sometimes find—without regard to the many aspects that confuse their betters—simple solutions to difficult questions.

IT was in February, 1897, that the Churchills went to Morchester to live. Frank had found for them a small house in a good neighbourhood, and it had been furnished by the two men, Fergus contributing many choice objects from the plentitude of his own collections. Emma emerged from her time of suffering into a world whose every aspect was new to her. She found herself in rooms dainty, almost faultless in taste; among books, valuable prints, and beautiful trifles of the kind that give distinction to the apartments that harbour them.

Churchill had ceased to be careless. Every detail of their *ménage* was studied with the purpose of putting Emma in a correct environment. He insisted upon many little refinements of living, about which he had lately appeared indifferent, as though they were essential to his ease of mind. He meant that his wife should have every opportunity and every incentive to get all possible gain from her marriage. Although he did not look forward to social triumphs

at any time, he was determined that their house, their life, should be in keeping with the best he had to offer. He had been very gentle, even tender, with Emma since they had come together. He had talked much with her and read to her, and she had begun to reflect in her manner and speech the quiet ease that, after a little, marked all his relations with his wife.

Emma was just below the medium height. Her figure was pretty; her hands and ears were small and well formed; her complexion was pale, but otherwise perfect; she had gray eyes, not large, and almost sad; the brows as they sloped away from the medial line went upwards more than is usual and turned down at an angle rather than in a curve. Her face was broad between the temples; her nose was a little irregular, the least bit uplifted at the end. The mouth was neither small nor large; the lips were inclined to fulness. A distinctive beauty was an exquisitely modelled chin. She had abundant hair—glossy and dark brown. Her appearance could not but excite interest, yet she had not the stamp of high breeding, but why not it was very hard to tell.

Emma was, of course, in mourning. Her black suited her, and Churchill was conscious of approval and of some contentment as they dined alone on the first evening of the new life.

The motive that had made Miss Ellerton wish to talk with Emma no longer existed. In its place there was an impression that it would be better to leave the Churchills alone until their adjustment was more complete. Mrs. Lawrence was the first woman to

call, and no one could have been more helpful in establishing the tone that was slowly but surely pervading Emma's manners. It was very difficult to have other than good manners in contact with Mrs. Lawrence. She was totally without affectation, and it was impossible for her to wound any sensibilities. Emma was won to her in a moment, discovering a type she had never known and yielding to a very noble womanhood a passionate admiration. Mrs. Lawrence was touched by the sad eyes and an evident desire to profit by every word that fell from her lips. She went frequently to see Emma, helping and steadying her as no one else could have done with all the will in the world. Mrs. Netherby did not call. She would have been glad to, if to do so had meant nothing but personal friendliness, because she was kind-hearted as well as inquisitive, but she knew also, by woman's instinct, that she had better not. If the time should ever come when Churchill should want to introduce his wife to the world, she might then be of some use.

As has been said, Dr. Lawrence had advised Churchill to seek a definite occupation. He had suggested a place in Marshall's mill, having in mind the advantage there would be in seeing the laborious life of a factory, and in knowing better what Marshall's burden was and how he carried it. Churchill volunteered for service, and was somewhat taken aback to learn that knowing nothing of business it was not easy to be fitted with a position of significance in a compact organisation for the manufacture of steel bars.

Theodore Marshall was not much disposed to indulge Churchill in his new whim—he did not under-

stand his friend's motive—until he learned that Churchill was acting under the advice of Dr. Lawrence. Then something had to be done.

Most men talk of their affairs to some woman and are braced by that woman's faith—in the man. Miss Thomas acted as Theodore's tonic. He wanted to know what on earth he should do with a man educated solely for a drawing-room or for essay writing. The lady was equal to the occasion. She proposed that Churchill should go over the business papers of the elder Marshall and arrange them for the son's inspection, with special reference to former relations with Le Mark. More than once before she had urged this piece of work upon Theodore, but stopped importuning him as she began to appreciate the killing mass of detail that occupied his days. Theodore adopted the suggestion and set Churchill at work.

Marshall's anxieties grew with cumulative effect as the year went on, with no changes for the better in the general situation and the imminence of a final defeat. He was spared the indignity of daily shifts to finance his business; money was always at hand; but in the mill things seemed to go as perversely as if the place were possessed by a devil. Either on account of a general discouragement or because of some occult influence for the making of mischief, his hold upon the men was plainly less secure. He found himself growing suspicious and inclined to be hard. Things went wrong as they had not formerly. There was an impairment of discipline that could hardly be accounted for by the posters about the election or the order against going across the street to drink.

Accidents happened, and the men who should have been responsible swore that there had been no lapse from duty.

Neither patient investigation nor fines, threatenings, or dismissals, stopped the trouble. The place seemed bewitched. Good men, called to account for errors or breakdowns in their departments, protested and were excused, or, after repeated disasters, they were discharged—excuses no longer accepted,—or they threw up their jobs in temper, for your workman in these United States will seldom keep a place in which he is much found fault with even when the times are bad and work is scarce.

A man of weaker nerves would have grown petulant in view of this disintegration of an organism nourished by years of wise and just management, or have come to believe in a baleful star. Theodore appeared to grow calmer, more patient, although firm to the verge of hardness, as the need for rigour increased. He was no believer in undiscoverable causes in the common affairs of industry, and he had in an eminent degree the high faith of mental power and energy, the assurance that methods based upon sound principles, well proved by experience, will inevitably win in the long run as against the chances of to-day or to-morrow. He was harassed by the disorganisation of the mill, but his confidence never wavered in his ability to discover and master the causes of trouble.

A matter that weighed like lead upon his soul was his growing indebtedness to persons or a person unknown. He was sure that there was concentrated somewhere a power that could ruin him as a man of



business by a nod of the head. The support represented by Mr. Brice withdrawn, he could not have gone on for a day. It was true that he was borrowing upon easy terms and gaining much by saving interest and brokers' commissions; that he was free to apply himself to tasks within the mill. These facts had to be placed against the danger of having but one creditor. After all, if he were borrowing from the banks, the calling of his loans by one would probably be followed by the same action on the part of the others. Then again, it was a question whether the banks would have continued to carry his loans.

It was hard for a proud man to feel himself absolutely in the power of a single will, and for an honest man to accumulate indebtedness with no sign of a turning tide in his affairs. This was the question that haunted his every hour: Was he doing right in going on? The property ought to be worth much more than his debts including the mortgage, but it was worth less than the bare ground as long as every month showed an unfavourable comparison between costs and receipts. Some one else might do better with it, but he doubted this, with the honesty of a man who knows he is doing well and will not distrust himself without cause.

As Churchill grew to some understanding of Marshall's difficulties, and of the valour and constancy with which he met them, he was abashed at the feebleness of his own trifling with life. He sometimes went to the house in Grove Street of an evening with papers Theodore had not time to examine in the day. The two men and Miss Thomas talked together, and

Churchill, once admitted to confidence, was allowed to gather the whole story of Marshall's position; nor was the confidence misplaced, if one betrayal is excepted.

One evening the Churchills went to the Lawrences to dine; it was Emma's first venture; no other guests were present. In the Doctor's study after dinner Churchill lapsed into an expansive mood and told to all the Lawrences and to his wife what sort of a man he had discovered. He told no business secrets,—or not many,—but he grew graphic as he warmed to his story of endurance, fidelity to defined principles, courage, patience, resourcefulness, energy, and intelligence. Here was a man who without a quiver to reveal his own danger stood on the edge of a pit, holding a weight that strained to utmost tension his every fibre, and with the certainty of genius directed a rude company of men in operations of much nicety.

Churchill, generously excited, spoke like an Athenian, and Margaret Lawrence comprehended at last what manner of man it was that had asked her interest in his work. Margaret was near to unreservedly loving this man, but she knew him now for the first time.

Emma listened also, with a light in her eyes. She was seeing her husband at his best, and her heart swelled with the thought of what his love might be to her if she could ever have it. Once, glancing her way, Churchill flushed as might a man who comes unexpectedly upon a valuable thing. That night, as these two went home, talking little, in the dark shadow of a great tree-trunk Churchill caught his wife in his

arms and kissed her—more than once. Emma could not speak at all after this performance. Under the next street lamp Churchill saw that her eyes were wet.

The Churchills gone, some one thought of Fanny, who had been present, but very quiet. When she wanted to be up past bedtime she had a way of obliterating herself as certain animals seek escape from observation by immobility and a colouring that presents no contrast with their surroundings. She was routed out of a deep chair and sent packing. Then Mrs. Lawrence said appreciatively:

"Husband, dear, you are a very wise man. I believe Russell Churchill is finding himself, and I think they are both falling in love."

The Doctor thanked her. Her tribute was tardy, but none the less welcome. Would she mind specifying who were meant by "both" and state with whom each was falling in love?

"The Churchills, stupid, with each other."

The Doctor expressed the opinion that it was high time they did.

"How do you feel about Theodore Marshall?"

"I feel disposed to find a flaw in his settlement with his little sister, and to hand him back the money he has paid over to her trustees."

"Do you think he is all Mr. Churchill fancies him?"

"I think he is not a bad sort."

"How horrid he is, Madge! I believe he thinks he made Mr. Marshall and is shy about praising his work."

Margaret could find nothing to say to this, and

when she was at a loss she had a provoking way of keeping silent. She was not, at the moment, in a mood for banter. She was assimilating new impressions, or rather dwelling upon a somewhat heroic figure that had that evening suddenly revealed itself from familiar lines, as Charles Ravenshoe, waiting for the order to charge at Alma, saw a grease spot on the coat of a man in the rank before him become a map of Sweden.

She had seen Theodore Marshall frequently since the summer, and they had talked of his work now and then; but more often they had compared notes about impersonal but essential things that must be discussed by people drawing near to each other in the intimacy of their inner natures. Theodore was not at ease in talking long about himself with the earnestness that stamps the thorough egotist. He passed lightly over the troubles that galled, and showed a cheerful optimism that to his instincts was better manners than to recite the story of his wrongs or labours. He was not a manufacturer when his business was to please a woman. There are those who follow a trade that they may do their part as men, and there are others who cease to be men in pursuit of a calling. Marshall was a gentleman as well as an effective man. This combination has its own charm; it is a union of strength and grace most pleasing to the discerning eye. Margaret did not put these thoughts into formal shape. If she had, there might have been more loss than gain. The impressions of her revery—not expressed in words—had the power of music to stir emotion. She said

Good-night and went to her room, on the way looking in upon Fanny, who was still wide-awake and voluble.

"Madge, is Miss Ellerton very rich?"

"I don't know, bad child; why?"

"She had a house at the Cape and now she has a horse."

"Well, she could have both and a bicycle besides without being very rich."

"She has beautiful clothes and I think—" here Fan hesitated and grew pink.

"Think what? Out with it, Chick."

"I don't know whether I ought to tell—but I think she gave the money for the library."

Madge was startled. "Nonsense," she said; "what makes you think so?"

"Well," Fanny faltered, "I was over there one day when she was writing checks, and I put them in envelopes for her, and they had 'Lawton & Haven' printed on them, just like the letter about the money for the library."

Margaret sat on the edge of the bed and thought a moment; her response was not immediately ready. Then she said, with the air of one who suppresses assumptions of cleverness:

"Silly Midget. Thousands of people keep their money at one bank. You are letting your imagination run away with you. Besides, you should remember that if any one had an idea where the money came from it was not to be talked about, papa said."

"I know he did. I won't talk about it to any one else, but I wish, if Miss Ellerton is very rich, she would

marry Mr. Marshall and let him have all the money he wants. You don't suppose she would, do you?"

Margaret was accustomed to Fanny's mental gyrations, but she was rather amazed at this combination. She leaned over and kissed the child, giving her a little shake by the shoulders.

"You little villain, what business have you bothering your head with grown-up people's affairs? You must not be so inquisitive. Go to sleep and mind your own little business or you will get into mischief. This comes of forgetting you when you ought to be in bed."

In her own room Margaret found her music marred. Fanny had introduced a discord. Why not? to be sure, she said to herself. Mary Ellerton must have a great deal of money. Before she went to sleep, another set of unphrased thoughts ran their riotous course. They proceeded from the understanding she had detected in the summer between the two people in her mind; from the reflection that her friend was very fascinating, clever, a thousand times more in touch with Theodore's interests than she was; that Mary had seen nearly as much of him as she had, and understood him far better; that Mary had *been to the mill*. What an easy solution of his difficulties—to marry a rich woman! And what a prize in herself the woman in question would be! Was she in the way? What ought she to do? It is after this fashion that we are played with by occurrences or suggestions that we cannot in the least control.

## Chapter XXVI

### MISS THOMAS RAKES UP OLD SCORES

Justice and tenacity of purpose have been said to be characteristics that go together, yet women have never received the credit for justice that would seem to accord with the rule.

MISS THOMAS proved to be right in her belief that something might come of searching the elder Marshall's papers. Churchill, going impatiently but persistently through them, came upon letters from Le Mark, copies of letters to him, memoranda, and finally upon a bundle of documents in a dusty box, from all of which he was able to reconstruct the situation at the time when it was proposed to sell the Steel Works. We have already noted the plan in outline. It was an ordinary scheme to incorporate a private business, highly profitable to an individual, and to sell as many shares as possible, with the prospect of paying six per cent. to investors.

This was the plan to be made public, with intimations that the six per cent. promised in a spirit of stern conservatism, would in all human probability wax to a glorious twelve per cent. But Churchill detected, upon getting Le Mark's letters together, an underlying purpose to reconvert the works, in fullness of time, into an instrument for private and particular gain. The hints of such a consummation,

read one at a time in different letters, might have escaped the attention of a mind disposed to honesty, or they might have caught the eye, and awakened a glow in a soul of another kind. Apparently they were not at first noticed by Marshall's father, whose mind seemed fully occupied with concern lest Le Mark should outwit him rather than seek his aid to despoil the investors.

It appeared that Le Mark, thinking either that his intimations had been well received, because unnoticed, or that he could not make his point without plainer speaking than was prudent in letters, had opened his mind more fully to Mr. Marshall in a personal interview, not formally arranged probably, but occurring as by chance. Mr. Marshall must have proposed another interview, to take place in his own office; there were allusions to a meeting or meetings there in Mr. Marshall's letters breaking off the negotiations, and it was plain that the manufacturer regarded Le Mark as a "bad lot"; that he had peremptorily refused to go any further in a matter engineered by a man who, he intimated, was no better than a swindler.

The conviction was forced upon Churchill—upon Theodore and Miss Thomas, when they came to study the correspondence—that Mr. Marshall could not have taken the ground he did with so much distinctness of language, put in writing, unless he had direct proof of Le Mark's rascality. Indeed, one got the impression that Mr. Marshall believed Le Mark to be at his mercy, that he intended to hold this power as a means of self-protection. Proof doubtless ex-



isted, but Churchill could not find it. One would have thought that there must have been a document embodying Le Mark's proposals. No such paper was unearthed, even after looking in all possible places at the office as well as in all places that were probable.

Miss Thomas asked and obtained permission to search the house. One day, moved by a determination to let go no chance however slight, she turned to some papers in a drawer of a cabinet in which the elder Marshall had kept locked away the meagre souvenirs of sentiment that he had cared to preserve. She found some very early love letters, little gifts from his wife, a diminutive shoe about four inches long, marked "Theodore, first shoes," and so on. At the bottom of the drawer, lying flat, was a piece of brown paper folded once. It served as a cover for something else. Within it she found a number of sheets of thin paper. They were a "press copy" of a stenographic report of an interview in Marshall's office between John Marshall and Michael Le Mark. Attached was a copy of an affidavit to the correctness of the report, signed by Sarah V. Rand; her signature was witnessed. Across the last page was written, "This is a substantially correct report of an interview held Oct. 13, 1892, between Mr. John Marshall and the undersigned, Michael Le Mark." This signature was also witnessed. Pinned to the tissue sheets was a memorandum in Mr. Marshall's hand and signed by him. It read: "These are press copies of papers in the upper left-hand locked drawer of my private safe at the works. I have engaged not to

use the facts contained in these papers to the prejudice of Le Mark unless he shall be detected in some attempt to injure me or others known to me. This interview took place in my private office. Miss Rand was present without Le Mark's knowledge. She was behind the door of the closet used for storing papers; the door was ajar."

Miss Thomas did not read the account of the interview. She handed the papers to Theodore, who, after going over them himself, read them to her and to Churchill, who had been summoned.

Le Mark had opened as usual with phrases used as dust to blind moral perceptions. He gradually came to his business, feeling his way, but less cautiously than was prudent, because he thought his central idea was already favourably entertained. Led on to be explicit by a calm reception of his overtures, he had finally proposed that, after the new company had been formed and the stock sold, Mr. Marshall should use the earnings for improvements, so as to render dividends impracticable. This naturally would depress the price of the stock, and give them an opportunity to buy it at a bargain. In other words, they were to make a prey of foreign and small domestic holders of the shares. Marshall was first to be paid for his property, secondly to be paid for managing it ostensibly for the benefit of the stockholders. He was then to strengthen the condition of the property, while discouraging the shareholders, and finally to buy back in large part at half price or less what he had sold at a full price. Le Mark was to sustain him in the board of directors, arrange for the buying of

depreciated shares for their joint account, and the two were to enjoy accruing profits.

Le Mark avoided direct statement, but Mr. Marshall sifted his words and reduced the proposal to its simplest terms. Finally he said:

"Mr. Le Mark, we are not women; we are business men. If we are to be partners, let us be frank with each other; your proposal amounts to this:"

Then followed a clear, precise statement of the plan, and Mr. Marshall said, "That is your proposition as I understand it."

Le Mark replied:

"You put the thing somewhat grossly, Mr. Marshall, but you see my point exactly. We shall act for the best ultimate interests of the property. If people whose only relation to it is to profit by our skill and industry, are too dull to appreciate our wise management, the fault is their own. We shall show our integrity of purpose by taking the stock they wish to sell and ultimately demonstrating its value."

Mr. Marshall closed the interview by saying:

"Very well, Mr. Le Mark. I take your meaning fully. If I may trouble you to come down here again day after to-morrow I will then give you my answer. Your proposal is one I quite comprehend, and there certainly should be money for both of us in carrying out your project."

On the reverse side of the memorandum, pinned to the copy, Mr. Marshall had written:

"Le Mark visited my office Oct. 15th. The notes of our previous interview were shown to him and he endorsed them. I refused to be a party to a

conspiracy to defraud. The copy herewith is retained in view of possible accident to the original papers."

After the documents had been read and examined, while Miss Thomas and Churchill were commenting upon them, Theodore fell silent, and seemed to be thinking with concentration. Presently he turned to them; his face cleared, and they stopped to hear what he had to say.

"I have been trying to remember about Miss Rand. I believe she came to me almost immediately after the accident to my father and asked rather boldly that her wages be raised to twenty dollars a week. She had been getting twelve. I thought she wanted too much, and she left at short notice. I saw her not long ago in some office. I think it may have been in Le Mark's."

"You have never come upon the originals of these papers?" Miss Thomas asked.

Theodore shook his head. "They are not in the safe. There is not in either of the safes a scrap of paper as big as a postage stamp that I have not examined."

"The drawer your father spoke of," Churchill said, "could Miss Rand get at that?"

"Yes," Theodore admitted reluctantly, "she might have done so. I am afraid that in the press and confusion of those first days I used to leave my keys about unwisely. There was no money in that safe, and it did not occur to me that any one who had access to the private office would tamper with the papers."

"You think you saw the woman in Le Mark's

office," Churchill went on. "You remember that she left you very soon after the accident. You left your keys about; she had access to the room. The document is gone. It all seems to fit together very neatly. Le Mark had a strong motive for getting possession of the paper; he bribed the girl and she stole it."

"Yes," Theodore assented, "it looks very simple, but there is a wide gap between our evidence and a conviction for theft. If we only knew that the paper had existed and disappeared, our information would not be worth much. With a press copy extant, the case is different. Suppose that Le Mark used the girl to steal the original, that fact, if proved, as is possible now, would constitute a penitentiary offence—a crime that has been of no use to him. The girl, moreover, may have been blackmailing him ever since."

"Hardly," Miss Thomas suggested, "if he got possession of the paper."

"Do you suppose Miss Rand knew of the copy?" Churchill asked.

Theodore could not answer this.

They fell to discussing the value of the "find," and to wondering how Le Mark had been induced to sign the report of the interview. Miss Thomas and Churchill were inclined to think an important discovery had been made, that promised great results. Theodore could not quite see his way to using the paper for his own benefit, although he admitted that it might be made an instrument of wrath for Le Mark. Whatever use might be made of Le Mark's confession, for the papers unearthed by Miss Thomas were a full if unwilling admission of guilt, it was at least

illuminating as to what might be expected of the man, in the way of robbery—should a chance offer,—and as revealing a motive for animosity against the Marshalls.

Le Mark was an unloved man whose self-esteem was boundless. He had grown to have immense capacities for hatred, and to find in that sentiment the chief nourishment for his coarse egotism. Theodore had been given a weapon, but there had come with it a revelation of the dangerous character of the enemy that increased his anxieties. He knew at last that he had to count with the duplicity and malice of Le Mark as well as with McLean's natural desire for vengeance. He knew that they were allies, that their combined strength was formidable. He would have given a great deal to know whether he had an ally himself—represented by Mr. Brice,—or whether supplying him for a time with money was in reality a hostile device for his complete ruin.

From the latter point of view he could not discern an adequate motive, unless there was a purpose to increase his indebtedness so that it would not only absorb his property but cripple him for life. This seemed improbable, because it appeared to mean an unremunerative outlay. Le Mark would not like paying money for the satisfaction of a grudge; he would much prefer a combination of revenge with plunder. It was all very dark. Theodore knew he must be vigilant, and he waited.

Miss Thomas hesitated a few days and then made a move upon her own account. She wrote a letter:

Mr. Le Mark will remember visiting Tysonville a number of years ago, and his acquaintance with Miss Thomas. If

Mr. Le Mark has preserved the letters written to him by Miss Thomas, and will be good enough to return them, Miss Thomas will be greatly obliged.

This letter was written upon paper stamped "52 Grove Street."

Within forty-eight hours Le Mark and Miss Thomas met, after more than twenty-five years, in the parlour of Emily Marshall's house. Le Mark called in the afternoon; he responded in person, and Miss Thomas went down to see him. He was standing, hat in hand, before the chimney-piece. The lines of his face were deeper and harder than usual; he was not a pleasant object for the eye to dwell upon, certainly not for Miss Thomas's eyes. She wondered at the possibility of happenings of long ago. Her bearing as she went toward him was composed and courteous, but it was not reassuring to the gentleman on the hearth-rug. He took one step forward to meet her, then waited, disconcerted and, for a moment, dumb, as she seated herself by a table to the right of the fireplace. He had managed something that might be taken for a bow; he shifted his hat to the other hand and spoke:

"I am naturally, my dear madam, somewhat at a loss to understand the import of the request contained in your letter. Your demand, coming after so long an interval, has, I confess, embarrassed me. At the risk of making an unwelcome visit I have come to see you, because I conceived it would be easier for us to arrive at a mutual understanding in a personal interview than by correspondence."

Le Mark paused. Miss Thomas was attentive but

silent. The gentleman resumed: "I very deeply regret that not anticipating this demand—the request contained in your letter,—looking back, as I did, with pain upon an episode that belongs to a distant period of my life, when I was betrayed by a weakness that had possibly a certain excuse, to—to—into an attitude that now I can only contemplate with deep humiliation, I am unable to meet your wishes. I have not preserved your letters."

The man's eyes were restless, dulled, and slightly yellow around the iris. Miss Thomas halted them for a moment with her clear, confident gaze that seemed to exact the truth. She said, "You know that they have been destroyed?"

Le Mark had not thought of the letters for at least twenty years. He had not the slightest recollection of what had become of them; he lied directly: "Yes, madam." He was horribly uncomfortable. Why should an almost forgotten error, committed long enough ago for every one connected with it to have died and been buried, assert its vitality in this intensely annoying manner? What did all this mean? He had an appalling feeling of insecurity. How did this woman—so perfectly sure of herself, in whose steady eyes he came near to seeing himself as she saw him,—how did she come to be in the Marshalls' house? He could not help asking her, and in doing so he assumed by an effort a little more of his ordinary manner.

"You are visiting our city? May I ask if you have long known our young friends here?" He waved a hand vaguely, as though to indicate that the room



was where the young friends belonged. "Very estimable people. I have had some relations with young Mr. Marshall. I think I have been of some service to him."

Miss Thomas's reply, spoken with her accurate measured intonation, gave Le Mark a fresh shock.

"I was for many years Miss Marshall's governess. I am now her companion and friend."

"You have been living in Morchester for many years? I confess I am astonished. I was not aware.—Ah! You can hardly have failed to know that I have been living here. I do not understand fully why you have so long postponed—ah!—the request contained in your recent letter."

"You can perhaps understand that I was reluctant to awaken recollections that cannot be agreeable either to you or to me."

"But why, may I ask, should you do so now? I beg your pardon, but I am a little at a loss——"

"You need not be. Every year adds to one's age, possibly to one's wisdom. I am no longer dependent. There is very little that I fear. I have few regrets and few desires. Past mistakes I wish to obliterate as far as possible. If my letters to you existed, I wished them destroyed."

Le Mark hesitated before speaking again. Finally he said, "And my letters to you?"

Miss Thomas answered at once.

"I cannot give them to you, because they are not here. I have them and they shall be destroyed."

Le Mark bowed.

"You will oblige me greatly by returning them. I

conceive that you must be aware that it will be a great relief to me, in my position, which is an honoured one, I believe, to destroy the evidences of a great mistake, a very great mistake, that has weighed heavily upon my conscience. Madam, I once did you a great wrong, but, as you say, years bring wisdom—and in this instance repentance. With profound sorrow for the injustice done you, I crave your pardon."

"Did you not do to yourself a greater wrong, in allowing your perceptions to become so blunted that you could misunderstand me, than you did to me by misconstruing my character?"

Le Mark inclined again. "I bow to your judgment. I can look back upon that incident only with confusion and, I may say, remorse. It may be some satisfaction to you to know that from my suffering then I derived a lesson that has been of the utmost value to me. My position at the present time in this community may be taken as evidence that I profited by the rebuke it was your fortune to administer. I trust that if there is any way in which I can be of service to you it may be my privilege to show how earnestly I desire to make reparation."

Miss Thomas was smiling a little bitterly in her heart. She felt that she knew the man to the core, and, although she appreciated his pompous hypocrisy, she believed that his vanity might move him to a desire to rehabilitate his character in the eyes of one to whom he had once exposed it in a way that must be galling to remember. It was not pleasant to feel that she had loved him. It was grotesque,

impossible, almost, that it should have been so. Her face showed not a trace of what was passing in her mind. Her eyes met Le Mark's again with perfect steadiness.

"You spoke of having had certain relations with Mr. Theodore Marshall. I believe you negotiated the mortgage upon the works, and you are one of his creditors, are you not?"

"Yes, madam, I did use my influence to enable him to borrow the money he wanted. I hold some of the bonds—more, perhaps, than is prudent. I was struck with the young man's chivalrous desire to fulfil his obligations to his sister."

"Mr. Le Mark, I am going to speak to you with great frankness. I am warmly attached to Mr. Marshall. I have seen him develop from a boy to an industrious and honourable man. I am sure that he has great qualities for the work he is doing; that he is certain to succeed if he can have time. You have spoken of regrets in connection with me. You will do me a greater favour than you did me injury in the past, if you will use your influence, which I know is great, to help Mr. Marshall through this crisis of his fortunes—a crisis, I am sure, only of the hard times.

"I am confident that the danger is all in the next year or two, if it is not more imminent; that with the return of ordinary business conditions he can make the works more profitable than they have ever been. I think I know of what I am speaking; I have been much in the confidence of the family for years. Will you do this?—Will you help this young man over a hard place? You and I are no longer young. We have

made mistakes that even now we do not like to recall. Our accounts will be made up before a great while. Our opportunities to place something to our credit will not be open forever. I am glad to see you because—although I did not expect to ever ask one—I want you to do me a favour; at the same time to do something for yourself that will be to your honour and worthy of the standing and character that are recognised as peculiarly yours. Will you do it?"

Le Mark felt better. He began to understand. He had not been in danger of blackmail. He had to do with a lady—a woman of conscience and tenderness; one who appealed to him because of his position and powers. He was no longer afraid. He drew up a chair—near to Miss Thomas.

"But I assure you, my dear lady, I have been Mr. Marshall's friend. I do not think he could have possibly borrowed the money he required if it had not been for me. Is he in any pressing need at present? What can I do for him now?"

"No, Mr. Le Mark, there is nothing to be done at the moment as far as I know. I simply want your assurance that you will not let him go down in the remorseless tide of these evil times, when the strong are wresting the last planks from the weak."

"My dear lady, I beg of you to trust me. Will you deny me an opportunity to do something for you? Tell me frankly. Is Mr. Marshall in danger? Is he hard pressed? I see that it is so. I am very much distressed. However, I thank you for this interview. You will see what I shall do."

Before Miss Thomas could prevent it, Le Mark had

seized her hand, pressed it, murmured a few words of gratitude, and walked briskly from the room. She was sorry he had touched her, half sorry that she had seen him. She was afraid that she had been influenced by curiosity and a desire to let him know that she had been long in Morchester, knowing of him when he knew nothing of her. She had once thought that she loved him. Was there nothing in the man to in a degree justify her in having, as a girl, been led by him? Then, for some reason that she would have found it hard to explain, she wanted to give him a chance. If there was a declaration of war, Le Mark's reputation might be seriously affected by the paper she had discovered. She hoped that he was human; that for his own sake as well as for Theodore's he would be found to have some bowels, some inclination to decency.

## Chapter XXVII

### TROUBLE AT THE MILL

The Devil shows how little feeling he has for a fool when he sends him to do another man's mischief.

**I**F anything astonishes us more than the confidence with which we can count upon ingratitude, it is the occasional discovery of a grateful soul. Not that the human heart is incapable of the sentiment of gratitude; this emotion bubbles up freely upon the removal of a deadening pressure, but the effervescence does not commonly persist, and the wine from which it has departed is particularly flat. If, after an interval of freedom we find the wine still sound and lively, the phenomenon surprises us as one uncommon in our experience.

Theodore Marshall had done what he could for Nansen after he had discovered him to be ill. He could not save him; he did pay for his funeral and pension his widow. One evening, as he was finishing his dinner, he was informed by Jason, the black, imperturbable, and indispensable man of all work about the Grove Street house, that a woman was waiting to see him in the small room he used as an office.

Mrs. Nansen said she had come to announce an intention to be married, after the completion of a few

more months of mourning, to a German carpenter, who was an old hand in the mill. From this beginning she went on to matters of moment in connection with the mysterious troubles that had lately affected the works.

Ferdinand Artzt had first hinted to the good woman he wished to wed of curious information in his possession concerning what was going on in the mill, and then allowed himself to be cross-questioned until Mrs. Nansen knew as much as he of the subject that interested her. She had tried to persuade Artzt to take his story to Marshall, and, finding he would not, she had determined to see Theodore herself,—to tell him all she had learned.

Artzt had found a ball of particularly dirty waste, a material that is used for wiping machinery, in a pile of light lumber in a corner of the carpenter shop. The excess of oil upon the waste, and its situation—where it could hardly have come unless intentionally put there—had excited his suspicions, it being a matter of common knowledge among mechanics that oily waste is liable to spontaneous combustion. He had growled at the crime, or the exceeding carelessness of exposing the premises to a fire, and, being slow of mind, only later had connected the incident with a bad tone that had crept into the men's talk of the management.

Another day, a man employed about the mill as a cleaner, a comparatively new hand, had stopped to talk with Artzt and shown an ugly temper in speaking of work and wages. He said he had been "taken on" by the foreman of the labourers at the

recommendation of a man named Skelton, who proved later to be a ward-heeler whose connection with politics was apparently his means of livelihood.

One Saturday night Artzt had come upon the sweeper drinking beer with a woman. He noticed, as he watched the pair from a distant part of the room, that both were wearing new clothes. Both were a little drunk, and the sweeper was spending lavishly. Now, pay-day at the mill fell upon Tuesday. It could hardly be that all this luxury came from current wages.

On Monday, Artzt, coming upon Mr. Sweeper, inquired if he had been celebrating his wedding. Mr. Sweeper had not, he affirmed, with much bad language; he had been having "a time"; he had better friends than he found at the — mill. It came to Artzt's knowledge that this spendthrift was given to treating other men in the works to drinks and to speaking ill of Marshall; the man was undoubtedly bent upon mischief. In the fruition of time the deliberate mind of the German began to connect the singular accidents that seemed epidemic about Marshall's premises with the unaccountable affluence and the malice of this objectionable person.

Theodore was occupied for an hour with Mrs. Nansen before he was able to arrange her communications into a coherent story. When he felt that he had extracted from her diffuse and inconsequent narrative all that she had to tell, he brought Miss Thomas and Emily in to see her. They finally sent her away with the sensation of having high and gracious friends to whom she had been becomingly loyal.



After the purport of the visit had been explained and its significance discussed, Emily promptly asked Theodore what he was going to do. Whenever there is perplexity as to how to meet a difficult situation there is always some one to put at once this inconsiderate question. Theodore did not know ; he would have to think about it.

The next day he talked over the matter with Churchill. It was arranged that the suspected man should be closely watched; and Theodore, a little reluctantly, acquiesced in Churchill's suggestion that they should advise with Fergus Frank, whom Marshall up to that time had not met. The consultation took place the following evening at Churchill's house. Marshall found that a prejudice he had conceived against Frank gave way quickly in face of the keen intellect of the young lawyer, and his intense hatred of persons and things that Theodore himself loved not at all. Frank searched for a motive that would explain a definite and persistent purpose to injure. The keeper of the grog shop across the street could be set down as an enemy. There were discharged men—probably not friendly. Was there any one else Marshall had reason to suspect? No; but there were hostile influences. The railroad had annoyed him as much as was possible without public scandal. Had he other enemies? Churchill suggested that McLean's feeling for Marshall could hardly be cordial. In spite of a reluctance upon Theodore's part to let his relations with the senator be considered as relative to the business in hand, the bare facts of his interviews with that gentleman were disclosed. Le

Mark's connection with the mortgage, also came out; then the story of his former relations with the elder Marshall, and the fact that some one was lending the son as much money as he wanted upon terms that were singularly easy.

Frank was strongly interested. He made many and searching inquiries, and was alert for any clue that would throw light on a situation that he obviously thought indicative of conspiracy. He asked permission to take any means he thought proper to get at the truth. It was agreed that he should have a free hand, and the conference ended.

Theodore went home, but Frank stayed long enough to extract from the expansive Churchill all that he knew about the McLean affair. Churchill mentioned Le Mark's demand in the summer for a subscription to the campaign fund and explained how the first difference between Marshall and McLean had grown out of it; he knew, too, that Emily Marshall had something to do with the second row. He could not forbear to speak of McLean's pursuit of Miss Ellerton, of which he was aware, although to talk of it to Frank caused him a momentary embarrassment. Fergus asked if Marshall knew Miss Ellerton, and arrived after a little at an insight into their relations. He inquired closely about the interest Churchill believed Miss Ellerton to have shown in Marshall. When he learned of the visit to the works, of the frequent meetings at Nansen's house, of the fact that Mary had spent the summer on Cape Ann, he rose to go with the air of a man who has at last arrived at all he was likely to get.

The name of the disreputable sweeper was Farron. Theodore had noticed the man,—he knew all his men's faces, the names of most of them,—but in the multitude of cares he had thought little about him. He personally saw and passed upon all men who were hired except labourers, who were taken or dismissed as there happened to be or not to be a need for them.

After Mrs. Nansen's visit the master's eye was upon Farron many times a day. It was plain that he was a shirk and a tricky fellow; his face was in itself an inditement. It would have been more agreeable to Theodore to send him off at once, but he had to keep the ill-conditioned dog, in the hope that by watching him something would be discovered more important than his own rascalities, or at least something that would insure a punishment. It had been agreed with Frank that in case there was occasion for action at the works, Theodore should not do more than was necessary at the moment without consultation.

Every day reports came in of Farron's idleness and vicious talk. The foreman of labourers, who had employed him to oblige his political friend Skelton, could put up with him no longer, and sent him to the office to be paid off. Theodore was advised of this but a moment before Farron would have received his money. He stepped into the outer office, inquired what the man was doing there, sent for the labour boss, suggested that Farron should have another trial, and let him go back to work. Then he telephoned to Fergus Frank, who urged him not to send Farron off if he could possibly help it.

The mere presence of such a fellow about the place

was an annoyance and an anxiety. Henry Carr, who commonly had a somewhat confidential commission to look after certain details all over the works, was the person selected to watch Farron. He was to let everything else go by the board to fulfil this duty.

Henry was in the habit of watching men; he was wary, patient, devoted to the Marshalls. One day he saw Farron at the dinner hour hanging about a small window in a partition between one of the mills and an adjoining engine-room. He reflected that he had seen Farron there once or twice before at the same hour. The lower member of the main belt from the engine ran diagonally under this window. It was made of leather and about thirty inches wide.

Henry slipped around into the engine-room. The engine was stopped for the noon hour; the driver was eating his dinner near a doorway that looked into the yard. There was a space about a foot wide, lit only by the window already mentioned, between the fly-wheel and the partition wall. Henry squeezed past the rim of the big wheel, which was some fifteen feet in diameter, and flattened himself against the partition. He had scarcely taken his place before an arm came through the opening. In the hand was a bright shoemaker's knife. The arm was not long enough to reach to the far side of the belt; it was withdrawn. Then Farron's head and shoulders appeared; he threw the whole upper part of his body over the sill and, reaching out quickly, drew the knife slowly across the width of the belt.

Henry heard the crisp sound of the parting of the fibres. He sprang forward, seized Farron by the

slack of the clothes on his shoulders, and with one sudden, strong pull—one foot braced against the partition—lugged the mischief-maker, body and boots, through the window. There was a struggle in which Farron was jammed against the wheel and past the rim. They both fell into the fly-wheel pit, between its wall and the spokes of the wheel. Farron, who was underneath, still had the knife. He had struck at Henry repeatedly in the scuffle, and one blow had cut deeply under the collar-bone, but now his right arm was twisted half around, between the rim of the wheel and the pit wall; try his utmost, with Henry on top of him, he could not get it out. His left arm was gone, for any use of it; what had happened he did not know, but the pain in it was excruciating and he could no more move it than if it had been taken off and buried. Meanwhile Henry's hands were on his throat, choking him to death and pounding his head upon the iron rim until he thought the jar would bring his brains into his mouth.

Doubtless Henry, who was in a blind rage, would have killed the helpless Farron if he had not, on suddenly becoming sensible of the fact that he was cut, grown so faint and scared that he had not strength either to continue choking and battering, or even to cry out. He tried to call Pete, the engineer; but his voice died on his lips in a whisper. He could not understand why the noise made by the struggle had not brought some one. Then it came to him that it was near one o'clock, when the engine would be started. He made an effort to get up and fainted.

Farron gathered in his legs and tried to use his

knees to rid him of the body that pinned him down. He could not get a purchase that held; Henry inert was as likely to be the death of him as Henry at his throat. It was no use; he must call.

Pete had gone into the yard to watch some noisy horse-play that had attracted the men in that part of the works. He heard nothing of the row in the engine-room or of Farron's feeble calling. Suddenly the whistle of a near-by factory began to blow for one o'clock. Pete, as he stepped through the door, returning to duty, pulled the cord of his own whistle and hooked it to a nail in the wall. Then he went to the starting bar of the engine. "Let the whistle blow a bit," he thought, "and give the boys a chance." The men were expected to be in their places before the whistle stopped sounding.

When the whistle started upon its prolonged shriek, Farron went nearly mad with terror. He struggled frantically with his legs and tossed, but could not throw off, poor Henry. He sweated, cursed, and screamed, but the din of the whistle would have drowned the bellowing of bulls. Meanwhile the wheel began to move, first one way and then the other, like a cradle rocking. This was to get the water from the cylinder by short strokes, before the piston was allowed full traverse. The two men lay in the hollow of the rim, which at the lowest point was five feet below the floor. As the wheel moved, they travelled up near to the edge of the pit on one side and then swept down to mount the other way. Once they came up so far that Farron got his right arm loose. It was bruised and strained, but not helpless. The thought

came to him that he might escape and leave Henry there with the knife, which he had dropped. Before he had time to limber up his arm or for a second thought they dipped again into the pit. At that moment the whistle stopped; Farron roared with all the strength left in him. Pete heard the cry from the neighbourhood of the fly-wheel and shut his throttle as fast as hands could turn the wheel of the valve. He ran around and peered into the dusk of the pit. Farron begged for help: "For God's sake take this carcass off me. Oh, my God, my God!" His nerves were quite gone; he was sobbing and repeating the first words that came to his lips, like a desperately frightened child.

Pete put his head through the window; one call, one wave of the hand, men were running to him from all sides. They ran around by way of the engine-room door and climbed through the window. "What is it?"—"What in the hell is the matter here?"—"God Almighty! there is a man in the pit!"—"Two of them!"—"Here, now I've got him; take him by the legs—higher up, you swab!"—"It's Henry Carr!"—"Look at the blood!—He's dead, sure!"—"Take him out near the door!"

Henry out of the way, Pete had reached down and hauled Farron up to the light. He held him shivering, whimpering, ghastly white—where he was not streaked with Henry's blood. As he was recognised, the true estimate in which the men held him came out, in the moment of excitement, in rough words of scorn, and imprecations. If they had known the whole story they might have killed him. Some one

did suggest that they should lash him to the spokes of the wheel and start the engine. But they did not know what the row meant; their instincts revolted against the man; they knew that he was at the bottom of whatever trouble there was. Meanwhile it was manifest that he needed a doctor. He was led to a room in the office where accidents were cared for. Henry on a stretcher had already arrived; he had his wits again, after a dose of spirits of ammonia, and was trying feverishly to tell Theodore, who was bending over him, about the belt, when Farron entered the room.

Marshall had sent for a doctor, for an ambulance. He had washed Henry's wound with an antiseptic, and Churchill was making strips of adhesive plaster while Theodore held the lips of the cut together.

Farron stood by—a man supporting him on either side. He heard himself accused and interrupted to deny. Theodore seemed not to hear him. He spoke to one of the men:

"Tell Pete not to start the engine; stop it slowly if it has started. Go; run for your life; the belt is cut!"

Farron got no attention of any kind until Henry was cared for as well as could be with the skill at hand.

The knife, with a razor edge, was raked out of the pit. The belt was found to be cut almost across, through one ply and into another; it would have surely parted as soon as the load came on it. This probably meant a wreck, with a possible loss of life. The news spread; the works were in an uproar.



Some one suggested a meeting to denounce the outrage. In three minutes the bar mill was full of men.

The doctor had just come and was examining Henry's injuries, when a scared stock-clerk hurried in and whispered to Theodore, who turned and left the room, saying, as he went, to the man by Farron—a blacksmith, one of the two that had led the fellow in—"If that man tries to get away, knock him in the head." Presently Marshall was back again—all attention to Henry Carr.

The ambulance arrived with its clanging bell, and fussy young doctor trying to be extremely professional. By the time this youth had put his questions, examined the work of the doctor first called in,—who was still there and twice the youngster's age,—and finally expressed himself satisfied, a crowd had gathered in the yard near the door where the ambulance was waiting. It watched in silence while the stretcher was being lifted in and pushed to its place. It saw the little doctor disappear inside the black door, which he pulled to after him; saw the ambulance out of the gate. Then a roar went up for Farron.

Theodore stepped forward, so as to stand in the doorway, and held up his hand. He was erect, cool, and smiling. "Cheer him, ye sheenies; by God, he is a fine man!" came from some impulsive Irishman, a little back in the crowd. The foreman of the rod mill stepped out. "Three cheers for Mr. Marshall!" They were given vigorously. The same man went on to say that a meeting had been held; he read the resolutions adopted:

*Whereas:* A dastardly outrage has been perpetrated in this mill, whereby much property might have been destroyed, with danger to life, and throwing a large number of men out of work, be it

*Resolved:* That we, the employees of the Marshall Iron and Steel Works, in mass-meeting assembled, hold all such acts in just detestation as unworthy of working-men and gentlemen. We denounce the perpetrator of this infamous wrong as a blackguard and a dirty bloater, unfit to associate with self-respecting mechanics and working-men.

*Resolved:* That we ask for the privilege of dealing with the man Farron in such a way that another of his sort will never want a job in this mill.

Theodore raised his hand again. He did not speak as to a crowd, but he could be well heard by all who were there.

"Men, I know well enough that such a piece of rascality as has been done to-day has no more sympathy from you than from me. I think I have proof that all the trouble in these works has come about not from any dissatisfaction on your part or any errors upon mine. We have all worked together in the past pleasantly enough, and we are going to do so again. All the trouble we have had—such as it has been—has come from outside. Some outsider has had an interest in making trouble. I have known this for a good while. I suspected this man Farron and had him watched. You know what a wretched brute he is. I have been waiting for him to do something that would bring him within reach of the law. I will take care of him and see that he is punished according to law. I thank you for your loyalty to the works, and ask you to take the rest of the day at my expense."

This little speech seemed to call for more cheers, but they had not died down before less pleasant cries were heard from the outskirts of the crowd. There was a vehement minority who were determined to get their hands upon Farron. There were calls for "Farron!"—"We want that man!"—"Hang him!"—"Take him to the pier-head!" Theodore still stood in the door. He said: "You can not have him; he belongs to the law."

Suddenly a man stood out in front. "Mr. Marshall, I suppose this is my last day in your employ, but we mean to have that man, and I warn you to stand aside before we rush the door."

Theodore answered quietly, "You had better first look to the gate."

All heads turned to the gateway, which admitted at that moment a patrol waggon full of policemen. Theodore turned to the rebel, who was looking somewhat sheepish, and in the general silence he said:

"You see, Blake, what a useful instrument the telephone may be." A laugh ran through the crowd; the trouble was over.

Fergus Frank went to the works that same afternoon and fully informed himself concerning all that had happened. Farron was placed under arrest. He was taken to a hospital, where his face was washed, his head patched up, and a dislocated shoulder readjusted. He had a hearing before a magistrate, was committed for trial, and bailed out immediately by a contractor with political affiliations. Two other men, one of whom had been vouched for by Mr. Skelton, absented themselves and never returned. They

must have been very much occupied in the new positions to which they were suddenly called, as they did not appear in person for the money due them, but sent orders to pay to bearer.

The mill began to run more smoothly.

## Chapter XXVIII

### MARSHALL MEETS A DUKE AND EXPERIENCES A VARIETY OF EMOTIONS

Put not your trust in Princes, neither refuse them the civility due to a common man.

**T**HEODORE MARSHALL had told Miss Thomas early in 1896 that he owed less money—aside from the mortgage on his mill—than was owing to him. Before a year had run round he could no longer have made this statement, notwithstanding the fact that he had borrowed on the security of his property more than was necessary to settle with Emily. A considerable part of his losses was due to bad debts that he could not honestly count as assets in preparing statements of the condition of the business. If the times should change for the better some of these debts might be collected; others were hopeless.

Within a week of the Farron incident Marshall received from his agent in New England disquieting news of the embarrassment of a house that had been for many years one of his best customers. This house was in his debt to a large amount on an open account. That is to say, no notes had been given; the money was simply owing to him for merchandise delivered. Without hesitation or delay he started

for Boston to see if anything could be done to avert the threatened disaster.

He took an afternoon train from New York. As he walked up the platform, keeping pace with a high-piled baggage truck, pulled by a thick-shouldered Irishman, he noticed that the man, although he kept shouting "One side!" was more than ordinarily careless of the safety of the people he passed. An old lady, turning to look for a maid or a bundle or something else on her mind, was jostled by a passer, became confused, and backed almost in front of the wheels. The Irishman pulling the load did not see her. His astonishment and wrath were considerable when Theodore, laying violent hands upon him in the neighbourhood of the collar, pulled him back and checked the speed of the truck sufficiently to save the lady. The baggage man showed an inclination to be rough of speech. Theodore spoke without a particle of temper, but with an air that was rather amusingly authoritative, considering that in the Forty-Second Street station he was only one of the meek American public, who commonly lie down before baggage trucks.

"Come, come. Stop your nonsense. Why, man, you would have killed the lady if I had n't collared you. Stop it, I say. Go on, if you are in such a hurry, and be more careful."

A well fed, well dressed man, who had the appearance of owning a barber, was standing on the platform of a parlour car opposite the spot where the truck had been halted. He watched the little scene with satisfaction and nodded to Theodore in a way

that indicated approval. Later the same man sauntered into the smoking compartment and sat down beside Marshall. Presently he said, "Going through to Boston?"

Theodore nodded. "Good train," he mentioned, by way of response.

From this small beginning they fell into talk about the times; everybody talked about the times in '97. The barbered man seemed pleased to find Theodore optimistic. As doctors in consultation, and arriving at a prognosis in the case of the invalid, general business, they hit it off together remarkably. They agreed that in consequence of gluttony there was impaired functional activity; that this condition was curable by first a period of low diet and then the stimulus of new interests and healthy food. They expected shortly to see the patient in abounding health. Theodore mentioned the case of a German gentleman who was told by his physician that it would be necessary to first reduce him a little and then to build him up; the patient responding, "Mein Gott, Doctor, don't miss the connection!"

They laughed together over this, and then the wealthy-looking gentleman put his hand upon Theodore's knee.

"I have a stateroom in this car. Come in and have a drink. My name is Craft."

"Be pleased to, I'm sure. My name is Marshall."

They went to the stateroom, where they found the barber. He was of the shade of a lightly coloured meerschaum—an excellent servant, discreetly attentive. The conversation was resumed.

"You are a New Yorker, Mr. Marshall?"

"No, I'm from Morchester. Capital whisky that."

Mr. Craft did not respond at once. He eyed Theodore from shoes to hat, with interest and a suggestion of amusement in his by no means timid eyes.

"In business in Morchester?"

"Yes," Theodore answered. "I am carrying on my father's business—an iron and steel works."

"Been a little up-hill lately?"

"Well, yes. I don't mind saying it has. Other people seem to be a little weary—to judge by the difficulty in getting them to pay their bills."

"Have another drink?"

"No, thank you. I am in fairly good shape. My health does n't really seem to require it."

Mr. Craft laughed lightly. "You look pretty sound. See here, I've taken a fancy to you. Are you going to let Le Mark have the mill?"

Theodore eyed his interlocutor for a moment and said:

"I suppose you know that you are much too important a person in Morchester, Mr. Craft, that I should not know to whom I am talking, although I did n't at first. It seems to me possible that you can answer your own question better than I can. My business has been a good one, and I know it well enough. I was brought up in it and I give my time to it. If the holders of our bonds only want their interest and their principal when it falls due, I think I shall keep the mill. If they want something else, it is possible they may get it, because I am in the dark



as to what they do want and I don't see at all well in the dark."

"What makes you think I know anything about it?" Craft asked.

"I don't think so. I only think you are more likely to than I am."

"Why?"

"Because you probably understand Le Mark and many things that I would like to but don't."

"What sort of things?"

"I should like to know why Le Mark arranged the mortgage, whether he wants the property or not; to know whether any one else wants it; why the M. & L. E. people have tried their best to hurt my business; why the assessment on my property has been increased fifty per cent.; who is sending scoundrels into my place to set fire-traps, cut belts, cripple the rolls, and bedevil the men."

"Well, I don't seem to feel that all this is very much in my line."

"I should hope not, but I thought you might be able to make a better guess than I can as to what it all means. I am quite at sea about it."

"I suppose Le Mark made you pay pretty well for finding the money?"

"He did."

"How much for his own little plum?"

"Three per cent."

"And took the bonds at a discount?"

"Five per cent."

"Did it to oblige you, I suppose?"

"I understand that he says so."

Mr. Craft grinned and Theodore responded in kind. The two men had reached an understanding. Craft said:

"I am not so clever as some people think. I don't know what Brother Le Mark is after this time. If there are people who want your hide, I am not in the deal. Now, see here. I have taken a fancy to you. Wait a bit." He took out a card and wrote two words upon it. "Here, take this; if you ever think you would like to see me, send it in. I guess this is Boston. Take care of yourself. Have another drink? No? Good-night. Keep your eye on the deacon."

As Marshall put the card away he saw written upon it: "Admit bearer. J. C."

That same evening Theodore tracked his agent to his house in a suburb and kept him out of bed two hours beyond his regular time. By noon the next day he had done all that was possible in the way of salvage. On the day following, the wreck was publicly announced. Notwithstanding his promptness of action Marshall stood to lose an important sum—a sum large enough to make it more doubtful than ever whether he was justified in going on himself. The blow was the more staggering because the broken house had been considered beyond suspicion. Its failure discredited his other accounts receivable.

A careful examination of the books of the works, upon Marshall's return, showed a condition of affairs so grave that he felt obliged to go to Mr. Brice with a full statement of the case, and offer to make any arrangement for the protection of his creditors that

seemed to them best. Mr. Brice examined the papers and heard the explanations necessary for their full comprehension. He asked permission to keep them for a day or two, promising to let Marshall know within a week what decision was reached.

To the young man, met so early in his career by the threat of a decisive defeat, the interval before he again saw Mr. Brice was a time of intense anxiety and bitterness. He suffered less from the prospect of losing his property than from the blow to his pride, and the consciousness that he could not ask Margaret Lawrence to marry him without inviting her to enter into a long engagement. There seemed to be a peculiar cruelty in his situation from the fact that, although he had worked almost to the limits of his strength, he had not been able to do full justice to all the demands upon him, as the only responsible administrator of a considerable business, because of annoyances that were unusual and wasteful of his time and energy.

He had not been able, while thoroughly occupied in trying to preserve the organisation and discipline of the works, to watch with sufficient closeness the ability of his customers to pay their bills. He had been prevented by extraneous influences from maintaining the nice adjustments necessary for high economy. He could derive no great comfort from the approval of his conscience. Perhaps it added somewhat to his distress to know that he had consistently adhered to what he believed to be right, and had worked to his maximum, only to be finally beaten. He was confident of ultimate success, if he could have time.

A long period of depression in all industries is invariably followed by a few years of great activity. If he read the signs of the times aright,—and if he hesitated to trust his judgment here, he felt that he might rely upon Mr. Craft's,—a great expansion of business and an era of higher prices were at hand. It would surely come in a year or two. Could he keep a place, he would win out finally. It was hard to be jockeyed from his position and forced to pull up in a ditch. He did not think of asking help of Mr. Craft. If he had, he could not have brought himself to do so. The obligation, if any should be incurred, would be to a man with whom he would not have cared to work. He fancied that Mr. Craft was not likely to throw his favours away.

Marshall answered a summons from Mr. Brice, with the gloomy fortitude of one who enters without winning the corridor of a prison in which a sentence is to be served. Brice said that his clients regretted that the results of the year had not been better; that they could not but own to some disappointment. They were aware that his difficulties had been great, but that fact was hardly to be considered as arguing well for the security of their loans. Under all the circumstances they felt compelled to say that, although they had in no sense lost confidence in his integrity of purpose or his ability, some better security must be provided than his notes. Mr. Brice paused, and Theodore seemed to hear an iron door shut behind him. However, it was no more than he expected. It was almost easier to face the worst than to continue in uncertainty. He said:

"Your clients are entirely in the right. Unfortunately there is nothing to offer them except the equity in the property."

"Precisely," Mr. Brice responded. "We propose that you give us a second mortgage for \$300,000. If you are right in your belief in an early revival of business, we may yet save what we have ventured in backing you. We will hand over to you the difference between the face of the mortgage and the amount you now owe us. We have believed it wise to make the amount loaned large enough to give you the advantage of a good working capital."

When Mr. Brice ceased, Theodore felt as one awakened from an oppressive dream. The prison walls had vanished; he was out in the air and sunshine, poor but free, with the world before him from which he could surely win all he wanted. His mind, now alert and active, took in at once the full import of this offer. No more dread of an unknown power, benign or malignant, that held the threads of his destiny—but time, security, success, Margaret! It took more steadiness now to keep his head than ever in his worst perplexities. So a man struggling long to make the shore against an under current that sucks him back, finding his weight upon his feet,—the sea cast off,—stands up and takes a breath. He is safe; the world is yet for him; but a moment later comes the fear he could not harbour when his last ounce of strength was needed to do the thing he might not live to do; the danger becomes vivid and the lassitude of fatigue weighs upon him so that hand and lip may tremble.

Theodore Marshall had a moment of expansion; the ground was again under his feet, he breathed deeply, the end had not come. Then he was sensible of the risks he had encountered, of the scant margin between his present security and the gulf he had so narrowly escaped.

After all it was not altogether by his strength he had been saved. There had been a fault in the rhythm of the surf, a wave missed, and the accident had given him life. Why was it? How came it that he should have such astounding luck? The fact that he had been saved by luck broke his self-confidence and left him with a feeling of weakness. He felt as if some one was determined to be good to him, to pull him through any peril that chanced. This was confusing; there was no one from whom such generosity or wisdom—put it either way—could at all be expected. Almost as soon as Mr. Brice's proposal had been stated, the question arose in Marshall's mind—Who is supplying the money? He asked if he could know; Mr. Brice shook his head and smiled.

"I am the mortgagee."

Theodore reflected for a moment and then said:

"Am I to understand that your clients, with full knowledge of my affairs, consider the taking of this mortgage to be good business?"

"Mr. Marshall," Mr. Brice returned calmly, "when we began to lend you money it was distinctly understood that no questions were to be asked as to the lenders or their motives. This condition must still be respected, and as fully in the case of the new loan

as in regard to the others. You are limited to accepting or refusing."

"Do you wish an immediate answer?"

"Not at all; we will give you any reasonable time to come to a decision. It is not an offer, however, that would commonly go begging—the circumstances being what they are. Have you any reason to suppose that it would not be good business for my clients to make the loan?"

Theodore answered with the deliberation of a man who is thinking.

"No, if I live, I believe your people will get back their money. If I should not, they will still have the security of a property worth fully the amount of both mortgages, provided it is well managed. Do you mind telling me the terms you propose for the second mortgage?"

Mr. Brice smiled again and said, with the air of a man whose words are privately amusing to himself:

"A gold mortgage, of course, Mr. Marshall, at five per cent., for four years. We draw the papers and hand you the money. There are no discounts or commissions or incidental charges of any kind. Have you any fault to find with the terms?"

"No, I have not, but to be frank, Mr. Brice, I feel as if I were being treated like a child that some one is determined to take care of. At all events I cannot see, I must own, any other motive for this remarkable offer, unless your people are gifted with extraordinary far-sightedness and sagacity—and courage, to boot."

"My people have all the qualities you suggest, Mr. Marshall."

"I hope so," Theodore replied, as he rose to go. "If I have friends I am grateful; if you represent the enemy you are far too deep for me. I am not likely to abandon the campaign, you know, because I'm not in the confidence of the general on the other side. Good-bye."

Theodore left Mr. Brice with a feeling that there was something rather fantastic about the various turns taken by his affairs. He looked upon himself, as did William Caxton, as a "simple person," and he did not understand why he should not be allowed to go on with his business as people ordinarily do, without mystery or any malicious interference or benevolent support. He seemed to be strangely entangled with "noble princes, lords and ladies, gentlemen or gentlewomen," or others equally aloof, as far as he could see, from his concerns. He wished that he might be allowed to put his strength into his business; earn his interest, and on these terms have done with the great of the earth. He could not see occasion for secret arrangements in connection with his affairs, and he was disturbed by a feeling of being to some degree, by no fault of his own, the central figure of a melodrama.

Within an hour he had been through the alternations of hope abandoned, Paradise gained, the depression that follows a crisis, and finally the revolt of outraged modesty. A man has gone far on the road to stoicism who is not fretted by the knowledge that other people have information touching his own in-



terests that he can not get—knowledge that in the fitness of things should be his; a man sensitive in his self-esteem very much hates to be a marionette, especially if cast in a heroic part.

The young man had considerable self-confidence and abundant energy. He felt that neither his abilities nor his efforts were the determining factors in the present exigencies of his life. The cud of his ruminations was by no means sweet. He chewed that cud, however, until the bitterness grew somewhat less as he got used to it, and then he bolted it. It was hardly worth while to bother himself about conditions he could not alter. His action must be determined by his best judgment, taking things as they were. His judgment inclined towards accepting the offer made by Brice. If he needed to borrow money and there were people willing to lend it, with apparently full protection to him and to themselves, but unwilling for eccentric reasons to be known in the matter, he had nothing to do but to take it or to kill his golden goose. Obviously he should take it; if he should he would; and the matter once settled beyond possibility of slip, he would speak to Margaret.

With three hundred thousand dollars in hand and four years in which to solve his problems, he was ready to give "hostages to fortune." This conclusion arrived at, he bent his mind again to practical details, in attention to which, he had already learned, there is more hope of mastery than in much speculation. Purely as a practical matter, a matter of prudence, he determined to lay the facts of his business

difficulties and the offer of Mr. Brice before Dr. Lawrence, to ask him if he saw any reason why the loan should not be accepted. He intended at the same time to tell the Doctor that he wanted to marry his daughter.

## Chapter XXIX

### MARSHALL LOSES AN ENGAGEMENT AND WINS A BATTLE

A bullet has a flatter trajectory than an arrow; directness implies force.

THE winter of 1896-7 proved to be a very different season for Mary Ellerton from any she had previously passed in Morchester. All that the town afforded in the way of social experience was offered to her, and she accepted as much as she could without losing zest for her social studies; she was quite in touch with her adopted world.

She saw little of Marshall, but much of Mr. Netherby; it was wonderful how often they contrived to meet. Mrs. Netherby affected a consuming jealousy, and she was furnished with material for much nonsense, owing to the fact that the guilty pair obviously sought occasions for private conversation.

Mr. Netherby was not in the habit of calling upon ladies, yet he went frequently to Mrs. Thane's house and was received by Miss Ellerton in her sitting-room upon the second floor. This fact had not escaped the observation of Margaret Lawrence. So intimate had the girls become that they saw each other every day or two; and Margaret, going unannounced up-stairs

to look for her friend in her own rooms, had more than once encountered Mr. Netherby, whom she found always upon the point of departure as she arrived.

It happened one day that Margaret came upon Mary and her gallant, surrounded by documents of formidable aspect; papers were spread out upon a table, strewn upon the floor. Margaret heard the phrase "manufacturing profit." She wanted to withdraw, but Mary had seen her, and flushing slightly, as she laid her hand upon Mr. Netherby's arm—his back was towards the door,—rose to welcome her. Mr. Netherby turned and at once attempted to simultaneously execute a bow, gather up the papers, and button his coat. Margaret refused to stay; she covered her retreat with the pretence of a message and was gone before Mr. Netherby could get out.

She was embarrassed by the incident, annoyed at having again interrupted the communings of these two, who seemed to have so much to talk about. Her mind reverted to Fanny's suggestions about Miss Ellerton's wealth, and by a natural sequence she thought of what wealth could do, of what it meant in power and in a thousand other ways. If in this connection a thought of Theodore Marshall rippled for an instant in her mind, it had no permanence. She felt that she had accidentally been intrusive, and she put from her any speculation about matters of which otherwise she would not have had knowledge.

It was only a few days later that Marshall sought Dr. Lawrence and told him about his affairs. After careful consideration the Doctor advised the execution of the second mortgage on the mill. Then the

young man stated his case as to Margaret. The Doctor was grave, and slow to answer; when it came, his answer was all that Theodore could ask.

"Marshall, I don't want to lose my daughter from the house; I shall have something of a grudge against any man who takes her away; I cannot say that you have brilliant prospects; but you are a good fellow, who will never forget the dignity of a good woman. I cannot object to your proposal; I will not interfere in any way."

Marshall went from the Doctor's study to Margaret, whom he found alone.

"I have been talking with your father about my affairs," he said; "they are rather complicated and not in an entirely satisfactory state, but they are in better order than they were; and I am more confident than is becoming as to the future. May I tell you what has been happening?"

Margaret assented, and Theodore began his story, speaking, when once under way, with the deepened voice of one who is strongly moved in talking of vital things. He went back to his father's death; to the terms of the will. He passed lightly over his desire to provide speedily for Emily. He told of difficulties he had been obliged to meet, of his trouble when failure seemed inevitable, of the unexpected aid that made an ultimate success now probable. He touched upon his ideals, such as they were. In fact, he spoke from his heart, with entire frankness, revealing the best of himself without conceit or an assumed modesty. The matter of his talk as much as the manner said: "I come to you in honesty and tell you all I

ought to tell the woman I wish to make my wife. My love is no less deep because I see in you not only a beautiful girl, but one who can understand the grave interests of men. With me and with you love can be no light thing."

Margaret listened almost in silence; she was plainly not at her ease. Theodore was at a loss to construe her manner, but as he talked there grew up in his mind an indefinite impression that he was encountering a purpose to repel him. He paused and their eyes met. Then he took his courage in his hands and said:

"Miss Margaret, I have loved you from the time I first knew you; I love you more than you can understand, and I have never loved any one else. A few days ago I thought I must not tell you this for a long time; I dare to now because good luck has given me a chance and I feel sure of winning, if I may have the happiness of working for you."

He stood before her and waited. Margaret was very pale, and when she spoke her voice was evidently controlled only by an effort.

"I am sorry," she said, almost in a whisper, "I cannot answer you as you would like. Do not think that I do not appreciate the value of what you offer me; I do indeed, but I cannot give you what you ask; it is impossible. Forgive me for hurting you; I do not wish to make you suffer, I can not help it."

She looked up at him at last, and he saw so much pain in her eyes that he could not urge her. When he spoke again there was a rally in his voice, as of one meaning to take a reverse with courage, to hide a wound.

"You must forgive me for obliging you to hurt a friend; and forgive me again, if I ask that we may go back a half-hour, so that I need not feel that I have lost ground this evening even if I have gained nothing."

Margaret had risen; she turned to adjust some books on a table and again faced him before she answered. Her voice was now at her command, and she had an air of resolution.

"No, you must not think of me. If I cannot love you now I never can. I admire and esteem you, but I will not let you waste a love any woman should be proud to awaken. You are strong; you have a strong man's enemies and friends. Put me out of your mind, and do the man's work that is yours. I am certain you cannot fail. You will find all any man can desire."

There was a note of certainty in Margaret's last words that attracted Marshall's attention. He asked promptly:

"Have I friends? What do you know of them? Who is it that lends me money?"

Margaret hesitated the fraction of a second and answered:

"No, I do not know who it is."

"But you can give me a clue?"

"I am afraid I cannot."

"Can you name some of my friends?"

"I can name one who is worth counting a friend."

"Thank you."

"Miss Ellerton."

Theodore made a movement of impatience. Margaret said almost with heat:

"You do not know her, but you should. I hardly know of any man as clever or of any woman as true and good. I know she is your friend. She saw your accident from her window looking into K Street; you are Mr. Churchill's hero, and all through their intimacy he talked of you until she knew you well before you and she had met. She has told me of your mill, and I know that her interest in such work as yours is as keen and intelligent as is possible—for a woman. I believe that she is very rich; that she manages her own affairs."

Theodore looked perplexed. He said rather indifferently:

"I am very grateful for Miss Ellerton's good opinion. I can see her cleverness and charm, and I do not mean to underrate the value of her friendship, if I may think of her as a friend; but I was searching rather for the friends who have run some risks to help me."

Margaret made no response; there was an intimation in her silence. Trouble gathered upon Theodore's face. He waited to catch Margaret's eye.

"Do you mean to suggest that Miss Ellerton has been helping me with money?"

"No, I did not mean to—" she stopped suddenly, and Marshall, turning, saw coming towards them Mrs. Lawrence. She had been with Fanny, who had gone to bed out of sorts and needed comforting before she slept. A few minutes later he took leave and went home with a sore and angry heart. It seemed to him now, more than ever, that he was played with; that others not himself determined the course of his



life. He was not "master of his fate"; he was the plaything of people who hid themselves and of events he could not foresee.

He was really the victim that evening of his odd integrity of character. He would not offer himself to Margaret until he had told her all that he believed she ought to know before answering—to press for acceptance and explain afterwards is the safer way in love-making. In the telling he made quite plain the singular disinterestedness or more remarkable sagacity of the unknown friends. Here was no taking advantage of his necessities, but the very help that made his way easy; made it improbable that the lenders would ever get more than a fair return on their venture; probable that they would not meet with ultimate loss. This is not the way of speculative finance. Margaret knew enough to know that; and there flashed upon her mind the scene in Mary Ellerton's parlour—Mr. Netherby and the papers, the phrase she had overheard about manufacturing profit. With the rapid intuition that is said to be a woman's gift, she reached the conviction that it was her friend's money that was to save the mill, or at least that it was Mary's interest in Marshall—Mr. Netherby possibly assisting—that was to do it.

She was equal to a great renunciation in another's favour; but it was not solely the idea of sacrificing her love for Marshall's advantage and her friend's happiness that found expression in her refusal. She had the pride of high breeding, and born of it the feeling—ungenerous perhaps, but humanly natural—that the man who was to be her husband must not

owe the success of his career, his means of livelihood, to the direct assistance of another woman who was in a sense her rival.

Margaret had long believed that Mary Ellerton's feeling for Marshall was such that she would have accepted him if his proposal had been made to her. Mary was venturing much, doing much for a man she loved, or admired to the verge of love. Margaret could not rob Mary of the man that had engaged her interest, and live with that man upon the fruits of her good-will. She did not venture to say plainly what she thought to be fact, yet in her heart she wanted Marshall to know the truth—to know it fully. If Miss Ellerton was lending him money, he ought to know it immediately or not at all; to tell him was to make a somewhat disloyal use of information acquired through the privileges of friendship.

Mary would certainly not want her secret told; yet Theodore was in danger of finding himself in a false position; baldly put, he would be in receipt of great favours from a woman who loved him, whom he did not love.

Marshall had spoken derisively when he had asked if Margaret meant that Mary Ellerton was supplying the money he needed. The idea was at first blush preposterous; dwelt upon in the long leisure of a sleepless night, it grew to be a little less absurd. He went over in his mind all that had passed between Miss Ellerton and himself. He recalled the impression, invariably made upon him when with her, that he was in the way of being bewitched. Yet, on the whole, she was rather straightforward than *rusé*. If

to him she was magnetic—fascinating after an unintelligible fashion; if she had for him an attraction he could not analyse, the explanation might lie in a fancy upon her part for him. He groaned at the idea that he should have come to wonder upon such grounds whether he had captivated a woman.

Then he went back to the more practical questions of her ability to lend large sums, of the probability of her doing so. Whether or not she had monies to venture he did not know; that she should step in to save his business was most unlikely. Who were they, then, that concerned themselves so much with his affairs? In this direction he arrived nowhere. Much as he disliked it, he came back again to Margaret's suggestion. It was an intolerable idea that he should be helpless except for the hand of a girl who influenced him strangely, against his will, when he was with her; yet a girl he did not love—he who loved some one else! He had a feeling of fierce rebellion against these mysteries that annoyed and belittled him. He would have done with them; he would rather go West and "punch cattle" than be protected by a girl—or by any one, for that matter. So it happened that this honest fellow, after being refused by one young woman in the evening, spent the night in thinking of another.

With the morning Marshall was cooler, but his resolution had not changed. He went early to Mr. Brice's office. That suave gentleman welcomed him with the calm civility of one who is ready to receive assent to an offer that cannot in the nature of men and things be refused. He was disconcerted by the

opening of the conversation. Theodore went at once to his point:

"You have laid some stress, Mr. Brice, upon a condition in the matter of this second mortgage, upon my agreeing not to ask any questions nor make any attempt to find out who are the actual lenders. I am sorry to say that whatever may result I can not accede fully to this condition. There is one question I am obliged to ask, one point upon which I must be satisfied, if I accept the loan. Is there any woman who is interested in this business; who is supplying all or a considerable part of the money?"

Mr. Brice frowned perceptibly. For a moment he looked fixedly at an ink spot upon his blotter, then raising his head, replied with a disagreeable positiveness in his voice:

"The condition is absolute, Mr. Marshall."

"Very well! Then we will consider the negotiations as broken off. I do not think there is a chance of my finding the money elsewhere. I shall probably have to make an assignment, or, if your clients prefer, I will give them a second mortgage for the amount I now owe them. I have enough money in bank to pay the men and current bills; there is no floating debt. I shall arrange to have orders on the books filled at other mills, and stop."

"Is not this decision a rash one, Mr. Marshall? Is it fair to my clients, who have shown entire confidence in you and done you, I should say, a substantial service? Are you not rather leaving them in the lurch?"

"I have thought of that. I will give my whole time to saving the property for the benefit of your

clients, if they wish me to act for them; but the ownership must pass, unless you can assure me that I am not incurring an obligation to a woman. If we only have to do with men, I will go on, on your terms."

"I answer no questions, Mr. Marshall; if for no other reason I cannot inform you upon the point you make, because I know nothing about it; but, before we proceed to final arrangements, I should like some time to think over the situation."

"I can quite see that," Theodore answered. "Please send for me when you are ready; and believe me, I am deeply obliged for your clients' good-will, and to you for a courtesy that has made it a pleasure to do business with you. Good-morning."

"Good-morning, Mr. Marshall."

Brice knew only Mr. Netherby in connection with the loans to Marshall, and he hastened to inform his principal of the new turn events had taken. Meanwhile, Marshall, whose blood was up, arousing the elementary instinct to arrive at swift conclusions, went that very afternoon to Washington Street and asked at Mrs. Thane's door for Miss Ellerton. He was shortly sipping tea from the hand of the enchantress, in a softly lighted drawing-room that seemed a mere setting for her person. She received him with evident pleasure. It was good of him to come; she felt flattered that a man so busy should think it worth while to give her an hour of daylight; it was so much more satisfactory to have a chat over afternoon tea on an off-day—fortunately it was not her day for receiving—than only to meet in a crowd; she had

heard from Miss Thomas that Mrs. Nansen was to marry again; poor Nansen! she often thought of him; she was better for having known him. How was Barney? Was he, Mr. Marshall, often upon the water? This was the second time he had come to her for tea. She wondered if Mr. McLean would drop in; he did sometimes; he was looking very well this winter, although she believed he was laid up for a time in the summer.

"It was just after you two were at my cottage together; you remember the evening, Mr. Marshall?"

Theodore could not help laughing. "Yes, I remember the evening very well."

Mary smiled. "I don't doubt Mr. McLean does. Do you know that he stayed at Beverly during his illness? You must not tell; Mrs. Netherby found out where he was and sent him little things she thought would be comforting; he does not know where they came from, and she thinks he had better not, I believe. What have you been doing lately? Anything warlike, or have you been simply industrial? Let me have your cup; shall I make your tea as before—two lumps, lemon, no cream?"

Theodore said he had been lately assisting at a combination of war and industry. Then he gave a light account of the Farron incident, emphasising particularly the foolish aspect of the rioters confronted with a dozen policemen at the moment they were about to take the law into their own hands.

"It was really amusing," he said; "the officers arrived so exactly upon the nick of time that it was almost dramatic."

Mary asked a few discreet questions about "the works," leading him to talk of them and of himself. She was trying to be tactful and succeeding well enough, but it was labour wasted because it was precisely what Marshall intended to do—to talk about the works. He came without unnecessary delay to his purpose to close the mill. He spoke of his efforts to weather the hard times and of his determination to stop, as if he had been working at a puzzle and finally given it up.

Mary was astonished and shocked. "You do not mean that you are going to surrender; to stop work; to fail? How can you? What do you mean? You are joking."

"Not at all, Miss Ellerton. That is exactly what I intend to do. I have not made the place pay. I have not capital to enable me to hold out, and I will not borrow any more from the people who have been acting as my bankers."

"Why not?"

"Because they are too mysterious. They lend to me through an agent; they will not disclose themselves, and they forbid me to ask questions. I do not know what it all means."

"Well, if they prefer not to be known, what difference does it make? Have you anything to fear?"

Theodore looked at her gravely—intently. "Yes," he said, "I have this to fear. . There is something in the air not unlike a conspiracy to get me out of the way, perhaps to steal my property. I can face that, but I do not care to find myself loaded with an indebtedness that may be a burden for life."

"I do not quite understand."

"Suppose, Miss Ellerton, that having borrowed large sums I should be called upon for sudden payment, or that having borrowed I should fail in the end, lose my mill, and not get rid of my creditors. I could never rest until I had paid my debts, and I might never be able to pay."

"Have you any reason to suppose that the people who have been lending to you did so from bad motives?"

"How can I tell? I do not know who they are even. Where am I to go for information? Can you tell me?"

Mary looked up at him and smiled rather wanly. She had been hit suddenly and hard; her breath was taken away for the instant. Marshall gave her no time to recover. He repeated his question:

"Can you tell me?"

"Now you are joking, Mr. Marshall. Is it likely that I should know more of your business than you do? Please——"

He interrupted her: "No, but do you?"

"Do I what? Know more of your business——"

"Can you tell me who has been lending me money?"

"Are you not rude, Mr. Marshall? What do you mean by pressing me with such a question? Do you intend to take me by the throat and exact categorical answers about your own affairs? Do you take me for a clairvoyant, a sibyl, or an oracle?"

"Miss Ellerton," Theodore said slowly, with suffering in his voice, "I cannot exact anything. Take me for a madman, if you like, who must be appeased



by concession to an absurdity; cross my name from the list of your friends; refuse to see me again, but be kind enough now to answer my question. I can not explain to you why, yet it is a matter of life and death to me that you should."

Mary now had herself in hand. She said quite coolly and pleasantly:

"Well, Mr. Marshall, I so seldom have the pleasure of seeing you here, I suppose I must humour you. I answer that I really cannot give you any information upon the subject you have done me the honour to consult me about, and for a reason that is no doubt obvious to your temporarily clouded mind. I am very much interested in your works, but before you go I want you to tell me where I can find something in the shape of a compendium that will post me, to the conversational point, about the beginnings of mediæval literature."

Marshall was silent while the clock on the mantel ticked away nearly a quarter of a minute. Then he said quietly:

"Are you not guilty of an evasion? I said your answer was a matter of life and death to me."

Mary was more dangerously surprised by this unexpected return to the attack than by the first assault. She flushed to her hair; she was angry and it was not a familiar sensation.

"Upon my word, Mr. Marshall, you are rather brutally insistent."

"I know it. I mean to be."

"Very well, have it your own way. It was an evasion, and I think I am justified in evasions when you

are intrusive beyond measure. What right have you to force me to answer your questions?"

"None whatever, but you know there are some things a man can not do. I shall not borrow any more money."

"Will you be a little more explicit?"

"Yes, I will, at the risk of being extremely foolish. Have you been making investments in my notes? That is the simple question to which I greatly desire an answer."

Mary looked at him long and curiously. When she spoke she had recovered her temper; she even laughed a little.

"You are too strong for me, or too brutal. I have been buying your notes. Do you feel critical about my investments; five per cent. is a very fair return these days. Now, can you tell me where to find the compendium?"

"Why, Saintsbury, of course. Shall I send you the volume?"

There was a pause in which they looked at each other like wrestlers who have broken away and are breathing before clinching again. Mary was the first to give sign of battle.

"If you lend me the book, what interest will be exacted?"

"Mr. Saintsbury will perhaps fix the interest."

"For shame!"

"Yes, I know, but if you will spar I have to keep my hands up."

"Well, have you any particular objection to paying me five per cent.?"

"On the contrary, I hope to live long enough to pay you one hundred and five per cent.; nothing less will content me for an hour."

"Is it plain to you how it is to be done if you stop the mill?"

"Quite so. I shall give you a second mortgage to the amount of your loans. We shall then have a foreclosure and you can acquire the property for the face of the mortgages."

"Wait. I do not object to a second mortgage, but, if we foreclose, shall I not have to pay the first mortgage?"

"Naturally."

"It is for how much?"

"Four hundred thousand dollars."

"Your proposition strikes me as moderately cool. I am to find something over half a million and take your place in the works. Will you visit me and let me take you out in a boat?"

Marshall smiled somewhat grimly, but said nothing. She went on:

"I should judge from what I know of your business that it would be a delightful one for a young woman to manage. The mill does not pay, you say; it is the object of a conspiracy; crime and riot are rife there. It seems to me, Mr. Marshall, that you must have in mind some fable; I can't remember what it is, but there must be a fable illustrating such a substitution—a trap, a victim, a friend; the victim and the friend changing places. I have half a million in my purse, of course; that is a mere bagatelle."

"The half million is not really necessary, Miss Ellerton. You can remortgage, you know."

"I hate runnig into debt, Mr. Marshall. I might have a burden for life. I should never have rest until I paid, and I might never be able to pay."

"I hardly see how you are to avoid some trouble," Marshall said reflectively, "but I am sure you will ultimately make a lot out of the property."

"Your confidence is flattering, but I am not quite able to share it. To tell the truth, I have paid very little attention to the manufacture of iron and steel, and, notwithstanding my native ability, I have my doubts about succeeding where you have failed."

"You will not care probably to have a manager who has proved a failure, but if I can fill a gap—until you find a suitable assistant—you may count upon me; I will do my best."

"Mr. Marshall, what nonsense we have been talking! Nothing would hurt me so much as to have you stop; you must go on; conclude the arrangement for the second mortgage, as proposed by Mr. Brice, and make the business pay. It is true I made my investment without your knowledge; nevertheless, I think you ought to try to protect me; and there is no way in which you can do it so effectively as by continuing in possession and running the mill. There is really no difference between my money and Mr. Le Mark's, for instance. We have both lent you a trifle; we both want to be paid."

"As a mere matter of consideration for me, Miss Ellerton, please don't couple yourself with Le Mark. I do not like him."

"As you will; I have nothing in common with Mr. Le Mark, I trust, unless it be an interest in founding

a museum of art. I doubt if we are entirely in accord even there."

"You forget that you both want to be paid. As a matter of fact, though, Le Mark does not; he wants to get possession of my property, I believe."

"What makes you think so?"

"I think he has a scheme for using it as a basis for a stock company; that he took a mortgage in the hope that he would have an opportunity to acquire the works for the amount of the loan."

"Well, Mr. Marshall, we will not let him. Is it settled? You will go on?"

Theodore shook his head: "I cannot do it, Miss Ellerton."

"Why not, please?"

"I cannot go on without more money. I will not take a penny from you."

"That is a gracious remark."

"I do not mean to be ungracious; I simply mean that I cannot borrow from you at the present time; it would be an outrage. I do not know who are your advisers, but they should not have permitted a woman to make a large investment in the notes of a crippled house. The evil has come to pass; I cannot help that; but you go no further in the same direction."

"Not even to save the investment already made?"

Marshall shook his head again. Mary rose.

"You may be a good manager, Mr. Marshall, but you are very difficult to manage, and, if you will permit me to say so, you are incomprehensibly obstinate. I will not try any more to persuade you. I cannot even quarrel with you, as I would willingly, for I

seem to be in an abominable scrape and I may need your help. You have savagely torn a secret from me; will you be good enough to keep it all to yourself? You are the last person to whom I would have confided it, but it does not follow that I should like it given to the world. Please go on with Mr. Brice as if I did not exist; you must bear in mind that he has probably never even heard of me; and when you really must vivisect a fellow creature again you can come and see me."

As Marshall reached the street he said to himself: "I was a brute; she is a glorious girl, but what business had she with my paper?"

## Chapter XXX

### MISS ELLERTON PLAYS THE GAME

Activity is for some temperaments like the effervescence of sparkling water, making grateful the flat and unpalatable.

**I**N pursuit of her high calling as a social force, Mrs. Netherby gave a dinner in the interest of the Art Museum, which was still waiting for money. The sponsors of the project were all asked, also a few other people whose influence or money was desired. Some of the guests were strange to the society in which Mrs. Netherby and Mr. Le Mark were considerable figures. It was hoped by these two that the invitations to dine with them would be looked upon by certain persons as a distinction worth a thumping contribution to the building fund.

The fatuity of people socially well placed, in imagining that affability upon their part to other people less fortunate is sure of grateful recognition, is a curious instance of blindness to the facts of human nature. Mr. Craft was pleased to be at Mrs. Netherby's table; that he should be asked to dine with her was a tribute to his importance, but he was not grateful for the honour nor more inclined than formerly to love Le Mark. He had, however, a distinct cause for gratitude in that he sat next to Miss Ellerton. Mr. Netherby had given her her cue.

"Craft is not a bad fellow, aside from his crimes; tickle him, he'll be merry,—send you sugar plums in a gold box or lend you a steam yacht for a month."

Miss Ellerton did not use the handle of a fork upon Mr. Craft's ribs nor was she affable; she was frankly interested in his talk, responsive, pleasant, and quick of apprehension. He liked her immensely. He was a story-teller, with a fund of the little pointed anecdotes so useful to after-dinner speakers, and he had found a young woman upon whom humour was not thrown away.

In a momentary pause they heard Le Mark holding forth upon the subject of French art, about which he knew little more than the waiters. Craft, who had spent half a million on his education as a buyer of pictures, glanced up at Mary and detected a twinkle in her eye that led him to comment upon Le Mark's enthusiasm for art. He felt his way with a small sarcasm, and, finding encouragement, opened his heart:

"It will be a good thing to have a museum, but what beats me is how Le Mark happened to hit upon a picture gallery to put on that lot instead of a hippodrome or an engine house. He wanted something there, you know, to improve the neighbourhood."

Mary interjected: "He is the Park-Side Improvement Company, is he not?"

Craft smiled broadly. "Yes, the P. S. I. is mostly Le Mark. But, now I think of it, you must be the Miss Ellerton who owns the farm in the middle, or has Le Mark got that?"

"No, I am waiting for Mr. Le Mark to develop the neighbourhood."



"I see; that's right; wait, and watch him, but don't get snapped up like the fly on the dog's nose."

"You think our friend needs watching?"

"Well, between you and me, I should keep an eye open."

"You seem to have your doubts about the gentleman."

"My dear young lady, I am not a saint myself. I don't pretend to wear a halo, but I hate to scalp this man or that man—unless I am obliged to. It is all very well to take an occasional 'rake-off'; you are dealing with the impersonal public; when it comes to stamping out some poor devil who has a name, and a family perhaps, it's nasty business. I know of a case now—a young man I met in the train the other night going on to Boston, a young fellow I took a fancy to; he has a manufacturing business here in Morchester. Well, he has been plucked and bedeviled so that he is in a fair way to lose his last dollar. He inherited a fine property too."

"You mean Mr. Marshall?"

"I'm not mentioning any names. You would open your eyes, I guess, if I told you who are going for him. What made you think of Marshall? Is he a friend of yours?"

"A great friend."

"Really? I am glad to know it."

This conversation had been carried on in tones so low—at moments when other voices were raised—that it was inaudible to the rest of the table, but the good understanding between Mary and Mr. Craft had not escaped the attention of McLean. Miss Ellerton's

ability to excite the interest of any one with whom she was thrown, to engage the eager attention of men like Craft, of the United States senator who sat upon her other hand and was evidently waiting for his turn to come again, gave a fresh stimulus to the State senator's desire to possess her. He felt that with her as his wife, and with the fortune she would bring, he might indeed go far. He had dissipated the primal force of love in a half dozen affairs with various women, none of whom had won his unqualified admiration. Miss Ellerton had in all respects his full approval, and he unquestionably loved her, but his love was not a torrent; it was a well constructed canal; fed from a natural source, no doubt, it was nevertheless intended to be highly useful.

The dinner was not a signal success. Its purpose led to the bringing together of incongruous people, invited to concern themselves in a particular project. This plan of selection does not insure a congenial assembly. No one can predict what will happen as an incident of an occasion of this kind; it may see the beginning of an aversion or of a courtship, but it can hardly be a successful dinner.

The dreariest part of the evening comes after the separation of the sexes. In the drawing-room the women languidly exert attractions and repulsions, practise self-assertion and condescension, each according to her estimate of her social relation to her neighbours. In the smoking-room the over-fed men do very much the same, except that their impulses are tempered by a discretion born of the difficulty of conversing, when it is unsafe to speak freely upon topics

of actual interest for fear of treading upon sensitive toes.

Le Mark wished to placate Sanbourne and Craft, to impress with his lofty sense of public duty the United States senator and Bishop Babbington, and to avoid an appearance of doing these things that would be noted by Dr. Lawrence and Dr. Oliver Slade. McLean sought to improve the shining hour by exhibiting himself in as favourable a light as possible to Dr. Lawrence, because he knew of Miss Ellerton's intimacy with the Doctor's family. Diplomacy, as a great writer has said, is too apt to fall upon its nose. Neither Le Mark nor McLean had reason later for self-congratulation; they had both underestimated the astuteness of the men they sought to convince. There is an immense waste in such efforts, yet they cannot always be without result or they would not be so commonly followed.

Miss Ellerton dodged the happy family in the drawing-room by escaping to Mr. Netherby's den. The hostess knew where she had gone, and the other ladies gave no sign that they had noticed her disappearance.

Mr. Netherby greeted her with mockery:

"Has your ladyship enjoyed the beasts? Have they finished feeding?"

"You are a nice husband, sir, to leave your wife in the lurch at such a time! Why were you not present in Mr. Le Mark's place?"

"Is thy servant a jackal?"

Mary attempted no reply to this inquiry. She said:

"Do you know Mr. Craft well?"

"Not well—long though; in youth Johnny drove

a milk waggon and served my father's family; was he merry?"

"He was very good company. I think he does not admire Mr. Le Mark. He intimated that Mr. Marshall was in a fair way of being garrotted."

"You don't mean—dear lady! You have n't been talking Marshall with John Craft?"

"No, Mr. Craft was talking of Mr. Le Mark. From the point of view of a duke, who levies taxes upon the public, he appeared to regard Mr. Le Mark as an assassin. He said it was a nasty business to stab an individual that could be identified—unless there was a strong reason for murder. He spoke, in illustration, of a young man he had met on his way to Boston. He said it would make me open my eyes if I knew who were going for him. Dear Mr. Netherby, you do not think I am talkative about my affairs, do you?"

"Never did 'til you told the iron-master all he wanted to know."

"Now, is it kind to throw that in my teeth? I have explained that he was brutal; he frightened me, and wrung what he wanted from me by main strength. Some one else has betrayed us; unaided he never would have conceived the idea that brought him to see me. I don't like him at all."

This last declaration was made reflectively, there was no bitterness in it. After a pause that Mr. Netherby hesitated to break, Miss Ellerton lifted her head and asked:

"Have you thought of any help in this time of need, Mr. Netherby?"

"Want my advice?"

"You know I do."

"Don't remember that advice was asked when you made your venture."

"No, Mr. Netherby, people don't care much about advice when they are getting into trouble; it is when they want to get out that they value it."

"Yes; noticed that little perversity; human trait, but expensive. My advice is to get out, at any price; young man is mulish; won't use your money; can't go on without it; mill not a property to be desired by an inexperienced, generous, impulsive, extravagant, voluble young woman. If you have a million or so left in your coffers, eschew mills; not property in your line; let Le Mark foreclose; have an auction sale; pocket anything coming in in excess of mortgage No. 1, and play Providence in future upon small scale only."

"Is that really your advice?"

"Solemnly, it is."

"Will it not be rather unpleasant for Mr. Marshall to know that I have lost a considerable sum through loans to him?"

"So much the better; he's a brute, you know; you don't like him."

"Is there no alternative?"

"You can keep the mill; go on your knees to young man to manage it for you; make him go to you for money as needed; pay his wages."

"Very well, Mr. Netherby, I will take your advice. You are the only really trustworthy adviser I know. I am very sorry to have given you so much trouble, and I am deeply grateful."

"What will you give me if I get you out of your scrape with colours flying; debts of the brute paid in full; and something for him to put in his pockets?"

"Give you? With Mrs. Netherby's permission I will give you a touching evidence of affection."

"Will you leave the business to me?"

"I will indeed, and thank you."

Mr. Netherby gave a brief interval to reflection and then said:

"I can't be sure, you know, of working it out. I shall have to take some risks with your money. We shall see what can be done when the time comes. Where ought you to be at this moment? Don't mean to be rude, you know, but it certainly is n't here."

"Oh! I know I have broken the rules—no beasts admitted. I ought to be in the drawing-room, the dressing-room, or on the stairs. Good-night, dear friend."

She gave him her hand, passed noiselessly from the door through an entry, into the hall, and turned into the dressing-room where the other women of the dinner party were getting on their wraps. As she passed the drawing-room on her way out she slipped in to be kissed by Mrs. Netherby, who whispered:

"Was he in a good humour, dear? He was almost an anarchist before dinner; I was not sure he would not blow up the house."

"Well, he drove me away, but without real violence."

"You were fortunate. Good-night."

Marshall had been walking that evening in the hope of taming his restlessness. He had been over College

Hill and back, and had stopped at the club for a cigar. As he came again into the street he saw carriages rolling away from Mrs. Netherby's door, which was open. There were lights in the vestibule, and an electric lamp near by at the curb made a brilliant circle on the steps and sidewalk. He saw Mary Ellerton stand for a moment in the doorway, cloaked, but with nothing on her head. She looked up to see if the stars were out, then across to where he was waiting—halted by the picture she made, balanced in the square of light framed by the body of the house. He saw her gather up her skirts, descend half a dozen steps, and enter her carriage. As it passed him she leant forward to the window and fluttered in recognition a white gloved hand.

As Marshall replaced his hat he swore at himself and laughed. He had walked twice past Margaret's window that evening to see, the first time, that it was unlit; the second, that she was there. Why should he watch that window if the sight of this other girl was to fill his mind with a succession of images, alluring and provocative, that made him doubt his integrity, the steadiness of his purpose? He laughed at himself, but he could not get rid of the images. He saw and felt Mary Ellerton as she walked with him the day of their first meeting—it was a Sunday afternoon. He saw her in his dingy office, on the thwart before him in the boat—that night upon the water. He saw her at Nansen's bedside, in her cottage at the Cape, in the train as they went to Manchester, where he had no call to go that morning except that she had led him; in the twilight of her

aunt's drawing-room, fencing gallantly to keep her secret and steady in defeat.

Then she must shine out upon him at a moment the least expected—a vision of the night, charming and gracious. She had always been friendly; she had befriended him secretly, when he most needed a friend. She had ventured a fortune either from regard for him or because she believed in him. That she had done this, from either one motive or the other, concealing her action, was flattery to which it was hard to be insensible: and who so courageous, so wide-minded, so finely poised in intellect and character?

Marshall remembered that for all her faith in him, all her ready and open friendliness, he had not returned one word of thanks. He had violated her reticence, rejected her assistance, refused even to consider the protection of her interests—all as though she had insulted him. His treatment of her might be construed as signifying: You may be in love with me, I cannot prevent that, but kindly understand that I do not like it; I will not be under an obligation to a designing woman; I did not ask you to risk your money, I did not know you were doing it; if you lose every penny, that is not my affair. Surely she could not so misunderstand him. In no way had she questioned his motives. She had behaved perfectly; she always did. He had sought her, rudely flourished in her face the bank notes she had sent him, and thrown them in the fire. Thank her! Not at all; he had rather seemed to say, "How dare you, you jade?"

So he tormented himself until it seemed imperative



that he should see her again and tell her—what? That he was grateful? Yes, he ought to do that, but what would follow?

“ It’s good to be merry and wise;  
It’s good to be honest and true;  
It’s good to be off with the old love  
Before you are on with the new.”

These were not pleasant rhymes to run in one’s head within a fortnight after making a declaration of love.

Mary Ellerton was capable of a daring stroke or of a carefully planned campaign to arrive at the end of attaching to her the man she wished to marry. She was capable of a great devotion, of a passionate affection. The gates once lifted, the intruding tide would be irresistible; but the waters might press and beat ever so strongly against the barrier, it would not be removed except at her will. It was not in her nature to doubt, to hesitate, to yield by inches, to find herself at last love-lorn in a lifeless waste of longings or regrets.

At this time Miss Ellerton was in the glorious excitement of activity, when, with perfect health and a nervous force that seemed to defy fatigue, she was taking “ a deep gust of the world.” She was no longer a mere onlooker, only dimly sensible of the life that pulsed about her; she was of the life she observed; her will was of the forces that directed it. It is true that her will was not dominant, but it was effective; and the most real interests of life lie in the direction one can give to the swirl of forces that

determine the course of events. She knew of the coalition against Marshall; she had meant to defeat it; an accident, of which she as yet had no knowledge, had interfered. Mr. Netherby and Mr. Craft were reserves that might still give her a success in the moment of defeat. McLean she held at will; Marshall was difficult, but a conquest worth a sustained effort even in face of reverses. Without vanity she could not but be conscious that she exerted an actual influence over all with whom she came in contact. She valued this power at its worth and would not willingly waste or misuse it. She drove home, after seeing Marshall in front of the club, with a feeling that anything was possible; that while so much that was vital to herself and to others remained undetermined, but determinable, perhaps, by her efforts, it was good to be alive—to have her powers at command—to be able to direct them as she willed.

Meanwhile Margaret Lawrence saw the days go by without counsel or hope of changing the currents of her own life or of Marshall's. She had done what she believed to be right, and there she rested. She suffered because she loved and had hazarded her right to love; she sought relief in the careful discharge of duties rather than in excitement. While Mary Ellerton's mind was concentrated upon the situation and full of purpose, Margaret Lawrence tried to forget whatever touched herself, and to dwell in the faith that having done what she believed to be right it was not for her to take thought of consequences.

For a whole day and another night Marshall considered his position. He saw no reason to retreat

from the ground he had taken. It only remained to thank Miss Ellerton and proceed to wind up his affairs. He was so fortunate as to again find her alone upon the first trial. Before he could come to his point, Miss Ellerton made an allusion to passing him on the night of the dinner. She went on to tell him about that event.

"I was taken in by a United States senator, a State senator sat opposite, Mr. Le Mark was present, and on my right hand sat a friend of yours, who, without any knowledge of my unwelcome connection with your affairs, told me how much he admired you; it was no less a person than Mr. Craft."

"Mr. Craft and I, in the course of our lives, have been together in all about one hour."

"So much the more credit to your powers of pleasing and to Mr. Craft's perspicacity."

"Mr. Craft is one of the gentlemen called 'the Dukes' by Fergus Frank. I am fortunate in being in favour."

"Mr. Frank is Mr. Churchill's brother-in-law?"

"Yes, and he acted as my counsel when I was trying to discover and bring to punishment the disturbers at the mill. I believe he hopes to live to put Mr. Craft and some others of his kind in the penitentiary."

"You do not suppose Mr. Craft had anything to do with your difficulties?"

"Not at all; he even suggested that he might be of service to me; he gave me an order that entitles me to instant admittance to his presence." Theodore produced Mr. Craft's card from his pocket-book and handed it to Miss Ellerton, who examined it closely.

"You see it can be used by the bearer," Marshall continued. "Won't you keep it? I shall not want it."

"You do not seem to value Mr. Craft's friendship."

"No; I am a little wary of great men; their favours are dangerous."

"Still, I do not know that I shall want access to Mr. Craft."

"Nevertheless the card is valuable. I don't doubt there are people who would pay something for it."

"Very well, I will keep it; unregarded things occasionally prove useful."

"Miss Ellerton," Theodore said, with a change in his voice. "I left you the other day rather cavalierly. I failed to thank you, I am afraid, for your confidence in me and for your kind offer to back me further. I cannot tell you how much I am disturbed that you should have happened to choose my notes for an investment. I really feel almost bitterly against those who permitted you to do it, and I assure you I shall do my utmost to protect you."

"You have no cause, Mr. Marshall, to have any feeling about other people; I acted entirely upon my own judgment."

"My obligation is so much the greater," Marshall said gravely, "and my regret is still deeper."

"Mr. Marshall, let me explain how I came to have your paper. I chanced to see from my window the terrible accident that occurred in K Street. It was not unnatural that I should have been interested when Mr. Churchill, who used to come here a good deal before I knew many people in Morchester, talked

about you as his particular friend. Then, if you remember,—by the merest chance,—I visited your mill. Your work seemed to me of the kind I should prefer, if I were a man. A little later I was told that on account of your loyalty to Emily you were in a difficult position. In conversation with my closest friend and adviser I learned that you were threatened by a conspiracy. I had a fancy to checkmate the conspirators; I believed I could do so without danger; it amused me to have a hand in the game. How you discovered my secret I do not know; I thought it impossible that you should; now that you have me at a disadvantage, you propose to spoil my game and—but never mind. You will not be so unreasonable as to persist in your refusal of the other day?”

Marshall had risen and was standing on the hearth-rug looking down at Mary seated in a wicker chair beside a tea-table that glittered under a small lamp. He answered her last suggestion by a lifting of the head and the briefest possible phrase.

“I must,” he said. Then he went on slowly: “I have wondered if I had a friend and who that friend could be. I need not say that I am moved by your courageous attempt to save my property. That you meant to do it without my knowledge makes the deed a finer one; it will be something to remember always. I know that women do very noble things, but I could hardly have looked for this. Yet”—he paused a moment—“the fact that you were obliged to act secretly must make it apparent to you that I cannot let you go on.”

Mary made no answer. Marshall saw her head

turn from him. Where the light from under the lamp shade fell on her throat—at the edge of the shadow—a pink flush rose and faded. He also was silent; his heart beat as it never had before; he grew dizzy as he looked at the averted face and noted the quickened breathing that lightly stirred the lace that fell from the throat. He saw the hand that hung at her side close tightly upon itself, saw one little tap of the foot on the rug. He was conscious of a blinding impulse; he made a quick movement—then halted as if at an order. Their eyes met in swift simultaneous motion, arrested as when two blades meet in air. There was an instant's pause. Then Mary said, with absolute coolness:

"I have decided, Mr. Marshall, to accept your judgment, in so far as it relates to further loans. I have also decided not to acquire title to your works. I advise you to arrange for a public sale. After paying the first mortgage you can pay me as far as is convenient and fully at your convenience."

Marshall grew sick at heart. He said hoarsely:

"I beg you to take the works. I will guarantee that they will yield you a full return. I cannot guarantee payment under any other arrangement."

"No, Mr. Marshall."

He turned towards the chimney. She could see that he was terribly shaken. She crossed to a cabinet and came back with something in her hand. He turned again and met her, with a face like flint. She spoke lightly, holding a bright little object so that it gleamed in the lamp-light.

"Mr. McLean was here yesterday; he stayed long

and I was tempted to present him with this—I found it in the grass by the Manchester road the day we went down in the train together—then I reflected that guns left on the field are the spoil of the victor. Let me hand it over.”

Marshall steadied himself.

“Thank you very much. I never carry a pistol. It is illegal in this State to carry concealed weapons.”

Mary said quietly: “It was loaded when I found it. Mr. McLean does not appear to respect the law; he was even so hardy as to have his initials engraved upon this deadly weapon. How came he not to use it?”

“He did not intend to use it except as a threat.”

“I am not so sure; you may have been too quick for him. That may happen once, Mr. Marshall, but it is well to beware of men who are lacking in respect for fair play. If you will not carry this, will you not take it as a trophy?”

Mary held out her hand—the toy pistol lying in the palm. Their eyes met again. Theodore did not dare to touch her hand.

“No, Miss Ellerton, I have no use for it; put it away with Mr. Craft’s card; they are two interesting objects that I offer as a first recognition of my debt.”

For a moment they stood together by the hearth, avoiding each other’s eyes. Finally Marshall asked:

“Is it useless for me to plead my case further?”

“It is useless, Mr. Marshall.”

He went without another word, except a formal good-night. They did not touch hands.

## Chapter XXXI

### LE MARK SCORES AND MCLEAN TEMPTS HIS FATE

The interests of any one person are so involved with those of many people—as one jack-straw among fifty—that there is often considerable uncertainty about bringing any particular purpose to a successful issue.

THE astute Mr. Michael Le Mark had taken advantage of every possible opportunity to explain to Miss Ellerton the features of his great plan for the improvement of the neighbourhood about her farm. She, of course, was to participate in the results of his well-directed efforts, and such being the case he felt that the closest association would be for their mutual advantage. On one occasion he proposed an exchange of her farm for the stock of the Park-Side Improvement Company. At this she grew inattentive. She was apparently less intelligent than Le Mark believed possible. She was so stupid about business matters that she had to refer him to Lawton & Haven. This house was impenetrable to reason, to common sense, to any broad views concerning public improvements, or to the obvious benefits accruing to its client through alliance with Mr. Le Mark. That gentleman was exasperated to the last degree. He appealed again to the lady, and was told civilly but flatly that he must go to her agents. Le Mark



was profoundly disappointed; it was maddening to know of so much wealth, held by one who needed it so little, and to be baffled in his attempts to use it.

He had let the matter of a subscription to the Art Museum fund wait upon his labours for the Improvement Company. He had a stronger interest in "Park-Side," and as the museum was, after all, created for the company a shareholder in the latter ought to become a patron of art. But the plan to acquire the farm in exchange for shares having failed—hopelessly, as far as he could see—Mr. Le Mark made an appeal for the museum. He talked long and eloquently; he associated Miss Ellerton with the few large subscribers; he alluded piously to her fortunate situation in life and to the privilege of being able to contribute to a noble benefaction. He did not demand ten thousand dollars, but he grouped her with the persons who had made gifts to that amount; he took leave with a strong hope of getting the ten thousand and a moral certainty of five thousand at least.

Miss Ellerton had listened civilly and without protest; she had merely asked that he would not press for an answer on the spot; she wanted to think over his presentation of the subject. Two days later Mr. Le Mark received Miss Ellerton's reply by post. The letter implied a becoming belief in the probable value of the museum; it contained an assurance that she had given his arguments careful consideration, and concluded with a hope that the check enclosed would be of some little assistance. The check was for twenty dollars. Le Mark cursed her, and presently fell into thought.

He had never doubted, until within a few days,

that ultimately he would either get possession of Mary Ellerton's farm or be able to arrange with her for its absorption into the Park-Side tract upon terms that would permit the execution of his project, although he might be obliged to relinquish to her a considerable share of the profits. Now he was anxious about the success of his entire scheme. He had expected to find in the young woman in whose behalf he had bespoken Mrs. Netherby's good offices—a young person taken to the bosom of Morchester on his warrant, so to speak—a grateful and ready follower, and but now he had been obliged to curse her. He had forgotten that the obnoxious Churchill had got ahead of him in recommending Miss Ellerton to Mrs. Netherby. He had never learned, as a useful lesson, of the astonishing vitality and devilish ingenuity of evil—how it lives to vex and chasten in eccentric ways the parent that begets it. He had been lately admonished by the incident with Miss Thomas, but he was “stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears,” and still blind to the fact that he had better have struck Miss Ellerton than have conspired against Marshall.

There are shrewd, plain men like Jacob, who devise means to take over the birthrights of brothers faint from the labour of the field; who make fair-sounding bargains with a private intention to breed ring-streaked cattle and take the better part of the herd—men who withal may yet sire twelve tribes and see angels ascending and descending; but your Ahabs are apt to be smitten in the joints of the harness though the bow be drawn at a venture.

Le Mark was too deeply involved in the Park-Side affair to withdraw, and he was unable to see his way to go on without an accommodation with Miss Ellerton. Meanwhile, he was at a loss where to turn for money. His credit only needed to be shaken to precipitate dire distress.

At this juncture he received an unexpected call from Marshall, who told him that the July interest on his bonds would not be paid, and offered to join in a request to the court to order a public sale for the satisfaction of the mortgage. Le Mark drew a long breath; the conviction that he was a great man had a new birth; he tapped with a pen handle on the mahogany top of his desk and cleared his throat.

"I am shocked at this news, Mr. Marshall. It is hard to believe, after the assurance you gave me a year ago, that in so short a time we should find our investment in peril. I thought, I hoped you were doing well. I have understood that you had taken up most of your notes; I do not understand this—ah—collapse."

"If you will be good enough to recall our conversations," Marshall replied, "I think you will remember that I gave you no assurances except as to the value of the property. I believe I told you at the time that the business was not paying."

"Mr. Marshall, do you pretend to believe that I and my associates in this unfortunate business would have made the loan without a fair prospect of getting our interest?"

"I do not pretend at all," Theodore returned coldly. "You knew all you had a right to know and

drove a harder bargain than would have been justifiable if you had considered the venture without risk. However, that is not the question now. I came to arrange for the surrender of the property with the least possible delay and expense."

Le Mark threw himself back in his chair and rolled his eyes; he brought his clenched fist down heavily upon his desk as though overcome by a calamity. In fact, he was thinking of how he could make the most of this happy turn in his fortunes. He said:

"Is the matter so simple as you appear to think? How about the other creditors? Will you not have to make an assignment or have a receiver appointed?"

"You can apply for a receiver if you like, but there will be no other claims to be proved."

"No other debts! And you come here with the cool announcement that you have taken care of all your other creditors and left us to shift for ourselves! You have a property that you claim to be worth over a million, some other assets, I presume; liabilities four hundred thousand; yet you lie down and tell us to take your load! Why don't you find more money, if you need it?—arrange a second mortgage and protect us?"

"I have not come here to discuss my business with you, Mr. Le Mark, or my character or obligations. I have made a statement of facts, upon which you will wish, I presume, to take some action."

"Do you mean to say that if it were possible to borrow more money you would not do it and go on?"

"Precisely; I borrow no more money."

"Well, Mr. Marshall," Le Mark exclaimed in the

tone of a good man grieved at the hopeless state of an abandoned sinner, "you must give me a little time, really!"

"As much or as little as you want. A receivership is costly; the plan I propose is simple and inexpensive."

"Do you know of any possible buyer, Mr. Marshall?"

"I do not."

"It looks as if we should be obliged to take the property?"

"Very much so."

"I will let you hear from me within a few days, Mr. Marshall. Meanwhile I trust you will keep your own counsel and continue to operate the works." Le Mark turned to his desk and Theodore passed out with a brief "Good-day" that met with no audible response.

When Marshall said that there were no claims to be proved other than those of the bondholders, he spoke accurately. Mr. Brice had informed him that his clients would not appear; that they had perfect confidence that he would apply any surplus, left after settlement with the mortgagees, to the liquidation of his debt to them. There were no floating debts of importance, and there was salable stock on hand not covered by the mortgage. Indeed, Marshall might have continued to operate the works without borrowing further from Miss Ellerton, if it had not been for the awkward fact that the business was not profitable; he was running a little behind every month.

Left alone, Le Mark reflected for a quarter of an hour, pencil in hand, occasionally jotting down figures that he afterwards scribbled over until they were

illegible. Within an hour he was closeted with McLean, who had been summoned by telephone. Later they visited Mr. Grant and Mr. Mather. A syndicate was formed—it was agreed that Mr. Garrison should come in at the proper time—to buy the Marshall Iron and Steel Works at the foreclosure sale. A committee of bondholders was also appointed to call in the bonds and arrange with the trustee under the mortgage that the sale should take place without delay. All but a few of the bonds were in the hands of the members of the syndicate; those outstanding had been sold upon the recommendation of the gentlemen just named; they were probably still in the possession of the original buyers; it was decided to look them up and magnanimously to offer to take them at a trifling discount. The syndicate would then hold all the bonds and be in a position to treat with the railroad company.

It proved to be an easy matter to carry out this plan. Then Le Mark had a conference with Mr. Garrison, who undertook to secure the formal consent of his directors to the purchase of the property at the price already fixed in a former resolution of the board. All this was done so quietly and swiftly that no rumour of the impending event had been heard in "the street"; the members of the syndicate were cheerfully confident, with good reason, of making a successful "turn."

To McLean a windfall of sixty or seventy thousand dollars was important. He was in high spirits and disposed to tempt his luck while in the vein. At all events he would go to see Miss Ellerton. He called

in the evening and was received in a small parlour adjoining the drawing-room. His first words struck the note of his temper.

"I am fortunate in finding you; this is my good day; you won't mind giving me an hour?"

"Not at all," Mary replied, laughing, as she shut a book in her hand. "Johnson, I am not at home to any one."

It would not have been like McLean to proceed at once to the purpose of his visit. He wanted the better part of a half-hour to work up to his climax. He asked after Mrs. Thane, made some general comments on the winter just passed, and poked a little fun at Mrs. Netherby's dinner. He added:

"You seemed to get on very well with Mr. Craft."

"I liked him," Mary said. "He was quite straightforward and very keen; he told excellent stories, and they all had a point or an application. Do you remember our first conversation on the piazza at 'The Farm'?"

"I remember every opportunity I have had to talk with you."

"Do you remember how frankly you talked to me that day? You gave me a summary of the practical rules of the successful man of action. We had begun by speaking of Mr. Le Mark. I suppose Mr. Craft belongs in the same category?"

"In a way," McLean answered. "He certainly is a man of action and successful, but he and Le Mark are hardly to be classed together. I am ashamed to say I was trying to shock you that day. I am afraid I was not fair to Le Mark."

"Why not?"

"Because Le Mark really does do something to serve the public; he is respectability itself, a man of position, and a very able man. I have found him a safe person to follow."

"Are you with him in the Park-Side Improvement Company?"

"Yes, although I hesitate to say so. I believe you do not look upon that enterprise with favour, and I dislike not to be in accord with you."

"Well, to be frank," Mary said, with an openness of manner that hinted at confidence, "I do not fancy Mr. Le Mark, and women, as you know, are not capable of impartiality. He fatigues me; when he talks I want to escape. Perhaps some time you will explain to me the Park-Side affair? Then I have another grievance against your friend; he recommended very strongly the bonds of the Marshall Iron Works; my aunt took some of them on my report of what Mr. Le Mark told me. The other day she was informed that the interest would not be paid and was asked to send her bonds to a committee."

"Le Mark certainly thought they were good," McLean hastened to assure her, "and I think Mrs. Thane will find that they are. The bondholders will have to take the property, but I am sure they will lose nothing in the end."

"How can that be? Never mind if I am stupid; be patient with me and I will try to understand. Will the new owners carry on the business?"

McLean shook his head: "I hardly think that would be wise; they must try to find a purchaser."



"Won't that mean a great deal of delay, and is it easy to find any one to buy such a place?" Mary asked with a slow opening of her eyes that McLean particularly liked to see. "Mrs. Thane is really very much troubled about her investment. She hardly knows to whom to go for advice when Mr. Le Mark fails her."

"Not a great delay in this case, I fancy," McLean said promptly. "I should like to tell you why if I may take you into our confidence."

"No, you had better not. It is not safe to trust me with secrets. I am a woman and I refuse to be bound to hold my tongue."

"Nevertheless, I shall venture this time. We know of a purchaser. The property adjoins the yards of the M. & L. E.; the railroad people have wanted it for years; in fact, the directors voted some months ago to buy the place if it could be secured at a certain price. I believe there is to be a meeting on Tuesday of next week to conclude the business. You had better not say this to your aunt, but you can assure her that she will not lose a penny; I will see to that."

Mary again opened her eyes. "I suppose Mr. Le Mark knew that the railroad wanted the land? That is the reason he was so confident about the security?"

"Possibly," McLean replied with a smile. "I think Mrs. Thane need not worry."

"Mr. Le Mark got his friends to join him in lending the money, did he not?" Mary inquired, as if beginning to see Mr. Le Mark's claims to respect.

"Yes, he managed the affair."

"Won't the railroad pay more than the amount of the mortgage?"

McLean smiled again. "Something more, I fancy."

"And the surplus goes to Mr. Marshall or to the bondholders?"

"Well, not to the bondholders. They will get only their principal and interest."

"I hope Mr. Marshall will get something; how came he to fail in this way? Is he too young to manage such a business or—what shall I say—too headstrong?"

McLean looked distressed. "I don't like to criticise Mr. Marshall. I really don't know much about him; but I believe he is one of the kind that goes about with chip on shoulder, antagonising men that it would be better to have as friends than enemies."

"He has made enemies?"

"I am afraid so, but I doubt if in any case he had capital enough to pull through. It is a sign of the times that men of small capital disappear when they are in the way of those whose resources are greater; men in Marshall's situation find their level in salaried positions. This tendency is a consequence of the huge combinations of to-day in which the final authority is highly centralised. We may not approve of this economic trend, but we have to recognise it as belonging to our time. How far the State shall interfere in industrial evolution, how far it can direct it, is a tremendous question."

"You never told me whether you obliged Mr. Plunkett in the little matter in which his interests clashed with a public improvement. Do you remember the talk at luncheon that first day at 'The Farm'?"

McLean laughed. "You are descending from the general to the particular. If it were not too long a story I should like to tell you the facts and ask for your judgment upon my conduct. I think, though, you have enough to do in keeping my conscience now without inquiring too closely about its past."

"Since when have I been the keeper of your conscience?"

"Since I have come to know you. With your clear head, your just notions of morality, and your woman's intuitions, you are absolutely invaluable. I should like to put my conscience in your hands for the rest of my life."

"This is flattery with a vengeance, Mr. McLean."

"It is the truth. I should like to put everything I have at your disposal; all that I can make of my future, my life. I love you, Miss Ellerton. There is no one in the world, I believe, so beautiful, so clever, so well suited to inspire a man having ambitions to follow them with credit. I love you; I cannot do without you."

McLean had risen and was standing over Miss Ellerton, who sat in a low chair. He did love her, and at this moment he was a rather gallant figure. He was good-looking, he was evidently in earnest, his voice shook, his eyes had an eager light as he bent toward her for a sign of encouragement.

When Miss Ellerton spoke neither her words nor her tone were reassuring, yet they indicated no strong protest.

"Sit down, Mr. McLean." He obeyed, drawing his chair nearer and leaning forward to listen. "You

have been good enough to ask me to join forces with you. It is only reasonable to tell me your plans. May I ask if you mean to make a career of politics?"

"Yes. I have served my apprenticeship—not altogether a pleasant one; it has given me a claim upon our people, and I am promised wider opportunities."

"It has brought you very much in contact with men and affairs?"

"You have no idea, perhaps, of how much. One sees the world as it is."

"And the ideas you formulated for me a year ago are the deductions you have drawn from experience?"

McLean laughed nervously. "But, Miss Ellerton, I was talking for the sake of talk that day."

"Yes? Perhaps you will not mind recasting your summary. Do you still think unselfishness is not a possible rule of life; that though you may enjoy the virtues of the moralists you can only indulge yourself in them as far as is safe without hazarding the main chance?"

"This is not fair," McLean asserted with heat and disgust. "I was talking to a stranger, exaggerating, posing, if you like. I was not in earnest."

Mary made a gesture of assent. "True, I suppose it is not fair; pardon me."

"You cannot imagine how difficult it is," McLean continued, "to steer a course between what is theoretically right and what is necessary to get results that are for the public good. Life in the world is not a simple matter by any means; that is why I count so much upon your aid."

"You must not count upon it too confidently, Mr.

McLean. I have not had your experience. Tell me, is it possible after the first steps in politics—when one is admitted to wider opportunities—to avoid the coarse associations, the little concessions to vulgar standards, and the tergiversations of the—apprenticeship?”

“Certainly it is; the whole thing is upon a higher plane, more dignified and reputable.”

“I should think it would be hard to change a habit.”

“I don't understand, Miss Ellerton. Are you not assuming bad habits that never existed? What have I done that you can object to? I once talked to you foolishly, but you cannot lay that up against me forever?”

Mary smiled faintly. “It is not fair, is it? You must have had some curious experiences,—have had occasions for tact and courage. I suppose you have not escaped personal danger? Have you sometimes found it necessary to go armed—to carry a pistol—when you went into turbulent wards?”

McLean made a movement of impatience. “From where have you got your ideas of politics, Miss Ellerton? We do not win elections with pistols.”

“No? I am afraid I am very ignorant. By the way, what became of you last summer after we had the pleasure of seeing you at supper? Mrs. Netherby says you went off without a leave-taking and disappeared as if you had been kidnapped. She was really troubled about you. I went to see her the next day and found her thoroughly put out. We drove to the hotel and the club in pursuit of you; you had vanished and left no clue.”

McLean grew hot; he moved restlessly and showed discomfort. It was hard to be forced at that moment to recall his confinement at Beverly. He remembered his suspicions as to who had sent him soups and croquettes; he wondered if he was played with then and now by the same audacious cruelty. He said:

"I was obliged to leave suddenly. I was much found fault with for being away from Morchester at all that summer. Miss Ellerton," he continued, after an uneasy pause, "we are getting away from a subject that is vital to me. I have waited a great while to speak to you on this subject. I have asked you to be my wife; your answer means my supreme happiness or utter wretchedness, yet you talk about trivial things as if nothing were at stake."

"But, Mr. McLean, you were not in earnest!—I beg you to forgive me. I cannot say yes to your proposal. I admire a fine ambition, the fortitude and energy that bring success; I love honesty and courage; I am drawn to men in the thick of the struggle, acquitting themselves manfully; but marry you I cannot. I am a thousand times obliged to you for all your graceful attentions, for your confidence, for the opportunities you have given me to see the world as you see it, but I cannot marry where my heart is not engaged, and you have not so much touched my heart as enlarged my understanding. Mr. McLean, I am flattered indeed by your offer, but absolutely I cannot be your wife."

She had risen. There was no room for doubt that her answer was final. There was not a shade of indecision or a trace of pity in voice or manner. McLean

bowed and left the room without a word. He had entered as jaunty as Satan before the Lord on the occasion when attention was invited to Job; he went out as crestfallen as Saul after David had first cut his skirts and then stolen his spear from his bolster. He might have said: "Behold, I have played the fool and have erred exceedingly."

## Chapter XXXII

### THE UNCERTAIN CHANCES OF DEVIOUS COURSES

"Il ne faut pas vendre la peau de l'ours avant de l'avoir tué."

**M**cLEAN had put his fate to the touch on a Friday night. At seven the next morning Miss Ellerton had coffee and a morsel in preparation for a ride. She arrived at Box-Walk Farm before Mr. Netherby had finished his early morning rounds, and found him in the kitchen garden intent upon planting.

It must be admitted, although one be saddened by the necessity of acknowledging it, that Miss Ellerton had not shown perfect candour on the previous evening in dealing with Mr. McLean. Technically she had refused to assume the obligations of a confidante: judged by an honest conscience she could not be acquitted of a guilty intent to lead McLean to betray the secrets of his pals. We can find no pleasure in dwelling upon this breach of decorum, but with fortitude we may be able to endure an account of its consequences. We shall not, therefore, recite the conversation between the lady and Mr. Netherby; it is enough to say that the gentleman changed his clothes and went to town; at eleven o'clock he was in Mr. Craft's private office.

To arrive at the distinction of being named a Duke



one must go through a good deal—enough to dull one's sensibility to surprises. Mr. Craft took most things as they came, without emotion or demonstration; but on receiving his visitor's card he seemed pleased and puzzled. Perhaps Mr. Netherby detected traces of the effect his announcement had produced; his first words were:

"Surprised to see me here, eh?—only man in Morchester who has n't at some time come to you for something; sort of a left-over, out of date, out of style; do for the farm."

Mr. Craft replied: "You are the only man I know smart enough to keep his pile up without handling the shovel."

"Not big enough for a shovel, Johnny," Mr. Netherby asserted, with a nervous show of diffidence. "I only potter around with a trowel and keep my eyes open; had to come to you at last; going to go right to the point; know your time is worth hundreds a minute. Johnny, Le Mark has a mortgage on a young man's mill; young chap has thrown up his hands; the Gorilla thinks the property will drop to him for four hundred thousand; Garrison wants to have the M. & L. E. board take it at seven-fifty—little syndicate in between somewhere; seven-fifty is cheap enough; railroad ought to pay it; but the difference might as well go to young chap as to the syndicate. The board meets next Tuesday; you know Eggleston—on the board; great friend of yours; why not have Eggleston insist that if the M. & L. E. is to agree to take the property at the price, the Gorilla shall give a bond to deliver? That's fair, is n't it?"

Craft nodded; his eyes twinkled. "Not shovelling for yourself in this thing, I understand; just hanging around with your trowel to help the young fellow, eh?"

"Well, Johnny, we ought to give the boys and girls a chance."

"Oh! There's a girl in it, is there? Girl's name begins with an E, perhaps?"

Mr. Netherby looked at the ceiling and, holding his eye-glasses by the little steel handle attached to the right-hand lens, fluttered them rapidly up and down. Mr. Craft resumed:

"You may count on me; I think you can count on Eggleston. I will see him. Now, if we attend to the board, will you take care of the rest?" Mr. Craft made a vigorous motion as if turning the wheel of a letter-press in the proper direction to screw it down.

Mr. Netherby took his eyes from the ceiling for a moment, smiled faintly, and nodded; he said: "Damned conspiracy, Johnny; mean trick! I'm game. Good-bye."

At the meeting of the M. & L. E. directors on Tuesday Mr. Garrison called attention to a former resolution of the board empowering him to buy the Marshall property. He said that he expected to be able soon to consummate the purchase; he wanted a final and formal authorisation to do so. In the discussion that followed, the facts were brought out that a syndicate held a mortgage that was to be immediately foreclosed; that the syndicate was ready to agree to sell at the price named.

Mr. Eggleston, a gentleman who voted at annual meetings a large number of shares not commonly thought to be all his own was particularly helpful in making clear the circumstances attending the impending transfer of title. He proposed that if the road agreed to buy, the sellers should give a bond to deliver; this proposal, put in the form of a motion, was adopted; the amount of the bond was fixed at \$50,000. Then the question was raised whether it was necessary to purchase the property from the syndicate at all—why not directly at the foreclosure sale? Mr. Garrison thought they could not depend upon that expectation; he had been informed a year previously, when he first brought the matter to the attention of the board, that Le Mark had an option; he had reason to believe that the option still survived,—in fact, Le Mark had recently referred to it. Moreover, as president of the company, acting by authority of a former resolution of the board, he was practically committed to a purchase at the price formerly fixed; again, if the railroad company was to appear as a bidder at the sale, it could not in good faith exact a bond to deliver for a stipulated sum.

Mr. Eggleston moved that the president be authorised to make an agreement with any person or persons that should provide: First, that the M. & L. E. R. R. Co., as party of the first part, should pay for the property known as the Marshall Iron and Steel Works, and covered by a certain mortgage (described), upon the delivery of a good and marketable title, the sum of seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars, less the difference, divided by two, between

seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars and the price paid at foreclosure, provided said price was less than seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Second: that the railroad company would not directly or indirectly bid for the property at the sale. Third: that the party of the second part should give a bond in the sum of fifty thousand dollars, placing that sum in the hands of a third party, as trustee under the agreement, to deliver a good and marketable title at a price to be determined as above stated.

After much ciphering and talk, Mr. Eggleston's motion was adopted, to the infinite disgust of Mr. Garrison.

The next day the syndicate—Mr. Garrison not present—met to consider the proposal of the railroad company. The worthy gentlemen who composed it were thoroughly disheartened and indignant; what was the meaning of Eggleston's intrusive action? They feared a trap; in spite of Le Mark's entreaties the association was dissolved. McLean was in the worst possible humour, he was entirely intractable, his leader could do nothing with him; the others coldly refused to be convinced.

Le Mark was enraged; his need for money was great, he could not suffer such a defeat. He determined to carry out his plan unaided. If the profits were to be divided with the railroad company, individual members of a syndicate would receive relatively little, but any one man acting alone stood to make more than twice as much as his share under the original plan. Le Mark thought he could negotiate a contract that would eliminate the risks

dreaded by his colleagues,—all risks save one,—one that he was too experienced to overlook. Yet it was a risk worth taking for so large a stake; he would play the game alone.

He said as much, and exacted a promise from his late colleagues to maintain a strict neutrality. If he succeeded he was to pay them a slight premium on their bonds.

The recalcitrant conduct of McLean was due to disappointment in his love-making and to irritation upon another count.

Fergus Frank was familiar with the criminal courts, and he was to some extent a power in politics; he was eager to bring Farron, the belt cutter, to trial; determined to have him convicted. The District-Attorney was apparently reluctant to have the case come up, and Frank was obliged to find a way to overcome the inertia or the preferences of the prosecuting officer. The case was at last put upon the docket and duly called, but the accused had disappeared; his bail was declared forfeit. It was not a large sum—a mere eight hundred dollars; yet it was more than the bondsman thought his friendship for Farron was worth. Even a contractor with political affiliations may object to being out of pocket eight hundred dollars to oblige a friend that he had never seen until he became his surety; the price of liberty—the friend's liberty—came too high.

Now, at just about the time that Farron's bail was forfeited, that is to say, between a Friday eventful in the life of the Hon. Felix McLean and the following Wednesday, Mr. McLean, with gloomy curses at

the inopportune expenditure, handed eight hundred-and-odd dollars in notes to Mr. Berry, who will be remembered as a member of the council that met in Mr. Le Mark's house not long before the opening of the loan collection of pictures. This fact is known, but it has proved too difficult to establish a connection between Mr. McLean's prodigality in a time of leanness and the careless good-humour with which the betrayed contractor met the allusions of his friends to the perfidy of the liberty-loving Farron.

At this time McLean's sufferings from depression of spirits were almost as great as Marshall's. The one had let loose the bird in the hand and gone fruitlessly into a particularly prickly bush; he was a pot-hunter, near to starving, with nothing to show for his tramping: the other, like a true sportsman, would have no game except that upon which his heart was set, although a noble quarry stood to him within easy range. Both had tried their luck and failed; neither could look to the future without misgivings; but if there had been question of applying immediately for positions in another world, Marshall could have presented better credentials than McLean.

Let our world give honour where it will, there is an ease of mind accompanying a clean conscience that sensibly lessens the stresses of adversity. There is something especially irritating in the knowledge that one has missed the gratification that was the inducement for signing the devil's papers, even if they were I O U's only for moderate amounts. This does not often happen, we admit,—the allurements of evil would be fatally diminished if it did; when it occurs, a feel-

ing of confidence betrayed makes the disappointment doubly poignant.

If Theodore Marshall had followed a usual course, having decided to let his mill go, he would have shut it up. He did not send off his men and lock the gates, because he could not bear to throw the men out of work so long as there was a chance that within a short time some one else would undertake to carry on the business. He was not waiting in hope of a happy accident or a turn of fortune that would save the situation; he had fully accepted the fact that the works were to pass out of his hands; but while he was their owner he wanted to keep them going as long as possible, even if he added to his losses by so doing.

Churchill did not know of Marshall's discovery of the source from which money had flowed so freely for the sustenance of the business. He was at a loss to understand the sudden determination to let the property go; he even suggested that he might be able to find more money himself, but Marshall would not hear of it; he preferred not to incur the risks incident to new debts. Dr. Lawrence was perplexed by the sudden change in Marshall's plans; Margaret was profoundly troubled. Theodore had been to the Lawrences' and had seen Margaret, but only in the family circle; they had not met alone since he made his proposal.

The Doctor saw that the wooing had not prospered, that the result was woe, nevertheless he kept his peace. Marshall told them all of the impending sale, yet he offered no explanations. Margaret was

left with the fear that she had divined the truth and led Marshall to perceive it with no result except mischief. Evidently Miss Ellerton and Marshall had not fallen into each other's arms, and there was to be no happy combination of money upon the one hand and of a place to use it upon the other; rather ruin for Theodore and derangement for her friend's daring and generous plans; it was even possible that ruin might be facing both friend and lover. She saw with some bitterness that it is not a perfectly simple matter to deflect a passionate attachment from one object to another, that one can hardly count with any degree of confidence upon a fortunate conjunction of events—events the course of which is dependent upon the action of others—when standing, one's self, quite outside of the sphere of influence. She discovered also that it is easier said than done—to take no thought of consequences.

Mary Ellerton would have made a vigorous effort to ascertain the truth and to have her way. Margaret did nothing to gain light, she felt no leading; she suffered and was still. Theodore was not blind to her depression; he saw that she was unhappy and his love for her welled up again in his heart more strongly than ever. Away from Miss Ellerton, certainly he loved Margaret, but he was almost compelled to doubt his constancy when he allowed himself to speculate upon the chances of another meeting with the woman who acted as an electrical storm upon the adjustment of his compass. He set his face against Miss Ellerton; he meant not to meet her.

The danger feared by Mr. Le Mark as attending



his attempt, single-handed, to execute his plans, was that some one—whom, he could not imagine—would bid against him at the sale. Should any one bid high enough he stood to lose the amount of his bond. If he had no competitor he would make enough to put him upon his feet and place him in a position to deride his late associates. He resolved to venture. With infinite care to guard himself as much as possible he entered into the contract with the railroad.

Meanwhile he took the preliminary steps looking to the consummation of the business. He urged Marshall to join him in an application to the court for an early sale. Theodore was perfectly willing to do so. He wanted release from the uncertainties of the present that he might sooner face the new conditions of the future. The sale was fixed for the 19th of June. On the last day of May the works were closed and the men discharged, paid to date. Marshall, Churchill, a few clerks, the watchmen, and a handful of men remained to wind up the business, close the accounts, and prepare for the disposal of the movable property; it had been stipulated that Marshall was to have a month after the sale in which to sell this material or take it away.

On the 19th of June a considerable number of persons were present when the auctioneer stepped behind his desk to sell to the highest bidder the Marshall Iron and Steel Works. He was a man of large proportions, his face was florid, and his manner rather jovial than dry. He rapped smartly with his hammer, and as conversation died away he looked whimsically at his audience.

In a pause before he began to speak he noted the late master of the mill standing in the rear of the little assembly, erect and cool, with a perfectly expressionless face. A man of slight frame and somewhat eccentric costume occupied a chair at the left of the first of three or four rows of seats arranged in an arc before the platform. On the extreme right of the same row sat Mr. Brice, quiet and self-possessed. Between these two were a half-dozen men who might have been dealers in real estate, attracted by a notable event in their line of business. There was a scant score of other men in the rows behind; at the back was Le Mark; beside him sat Mr. Dunker, who once undertook for Le Mark an inquiry concerning Miss Ellerton's farm. There was a clerk at a small table, shared with newspaper reporters; an officer of the court was present; near him was Fergus Frank; Churchill was on hand, plainly excited.

In a few moments a quiet fell upon the room: the terms of the sale were announced. Then the auctioneer said, "Gentlemen," and paused again. He was not at a loss how to begin, but the occasion was important and he wished to make the most of it. He proceeded to tell his hearers about the property: how it was situated, that the facilities for the receipt and the shipping of material were unequalled. He called attention to the proximity of abundant labour, he dwelt upon the large outlay made in recent years, with the purpose of putting the works in the highest state of efficiency; he alluded to the encumbrance upon the property as a trifle in view of the value of the land alone.

Of course it was none of his business, but he could not understand why, with so meagre a sum against it, this magnificent property should be sold to satisfy a mortgage. The mortgage indebtedness was for an amount not equal to the value of the buildings and fixtures, let alone the land. He asked the bidders to respond quickly. This was not a case in which a man bought a vase for the parlour mantelpiece, if he happened to be caught in a half-hearted bid. The gentlemen before him must have made up their minds as to what they wanted to do. It was not worth while to keep him talking for the sake of hearing his voice.

"Now, gentlemen, what am I offered? One million, a million, a million, eight hundred thousand, seven hundred and fifty, six, half a million, four-fifty, four-fifty, four, four, four hundred thousand. I am offered four hundred thousand as a starter, four hundred thousand — nonsense, gentlemen! Is the finest manufacturing property in Morchester to go at thirty-three per cent. of its value? Four hundred thousand, four-fifty, four-fifty, four-fifty, four-seventy-five. Are you asleep, gentlemen? Four-seventy-five, seventy-five, seventy-five, seventy-five. Five. Thank you. Five, five, five, a half-million; less than half-price, gentlemen."

The auctioneer dwelt upon the last bid, then raised his mallet, keeping his eyes upon the back row. He seemed to have ears that heard whispers through the clamour of his own calls, and eyes quick to interpret the slightest signal. Half-way in the descent of the mallet it was arrested. "Five and a quarter? Five and a quarter, five and a quarter."

Mr. Netherby fluttered his eye-glasses from his place on the left, Mr. Brice nodded almost imperceptibly; the bid was five and a half.

Fergus Frank, concealing himself as much as possible from Le Mark, watched that gentleman with the stony impassiveness of a toad intent upon a fly; his eyes never turned from the face of the man he had marked for his prey. Fergus would have something to say to Le Mark when the proper time arrived; he was thoroughly relishing the discomfiture of a brute he hated.

Le Mark was fully alive to the fact that the danger he had feared, but thought impossible, was upon him; he had a determined competitor. He was pale with apprehension of his peril; his skin was cold and wet; he suffered from a creeping sensation in the back that he had not experienced for years. Every time he reluctantly raised his bid by a slight jogging with the elbow applied to the arm of Mr. Dunker, it was bettered from somewhere in front, he could not tell where. Six hundred thousand was reached by tens. Le Mark had to moisten his lips and swallow before he could find voice enough to whisper to Dunker, "fives."

From this point the bidding proceeded slowly. Le Mark hung back time after time until the last moment; he soon dropped his periodical advance to a thousand. He was steadily met with an increase of twice as much from the front row. There were only two parties in the contest, the one reluctant, the other relatively prompt.

An intense silence had settled upon the audience,

no one moved except as eyes were turned from front to back, from back to front. Excitement was evident in every face except in Marshall's and in that of Mr. Brice, who was quite unruffled. The bidding dragged on, with painful pauses when it was the turn of the back row.

The auctioneer had stopped his appeals and his interjected remarks; he seemed an automaton fitted with a phonograph, repeating its monotonous call, as his eyes changed their angle of gaze and his arm rose and fell with the rhythm of his cries. At last Dunker made his final bid. Seven hundred and ninety-six thousand dollars. Le Mark's hands, that had been resting upon his cane, fell into his lap and his head dropped. Fergus Frank caught Mr. Netherby's eye—a turn of the head, a signal to Brice, a "No" to the auctioneer. The hammer fell suddenly.

"Mr. Michael Le Mark, seven hundred and ninety-six thousand dollars, and cheap at that." Le Mark rose and left the room without a word. He looked like a man who has felt and recognised the pang that means swift death. In the street he halted a moment to compose himself. Fergus Frank stepped up to him.

"I congratulate you, Mr. Le Mark. You have acquired a valuable property. Before you take any steps to transfer it, I should like an opportunity of bringing to your attention some matters of importance in connection with your purchase. Will you be good enough to make an appointment with me for a time that will suit your convenience—as soon as possible?"

Le Mark frowned.

"I think you had better see me."

The great man hesitated, an expression of **extreme** weariness came into his face, he inclined his **head** with a heavy gesture. "You will hear from me," he said, and took his way up the street.

## Chapter XXXIII

### AFTER THE SALE

If genius is not madness, it must be crime; it is so cruelly, wickedly disconcerting to simple souls living under the law of the commonplace.

MARSHALL had no reason to expect that the sale of the works would yield anything in excess of the claims under the mortgage; he had denied himself the hope that it might, accepting what he believed to be inevitable with the stoicism of a reasonable and courageous soul. He believed he should be able to gather together about a third of his indebtedness to Miss Ellerton; this he would pay over and then set about earning eighty thousand dollars, more or less, that he would still owe her.

To accumulate this sum, beginning with nothing, would be a long and laborious task, yet that he should in time perform it he little doubted. His confidence in his own powers was unshaken: he had been beaten because his situation was inherently weak and he had met, partly by accident, an unusual combination of obstacles. He still believed that in the long run efficiency would win as against ill-luck, and he knew that he was prudent and able. Not to have adhered to this conviction would have been a weakness; this fact also he recognised.

He had gone to the sale to see the thing through, to show himself—beaten, it was true, but not demoralised, not ashamed, not humiliated. If a year before he had thought he would prefer another occupation, he had now a set purpose to follow the vocation in which he had met his reverses. He might begin with a wheel-barrow,—he intended to manage a mill. As he had discounted the worst, he watched the opening of the sale as little perturbed as any one present. He was not cheerful, but he thought he could not be moved by anything that might happen.

When the bids first rose to amounts greater than he had anticipated, he felt no elation. That the issue should be unexpected seemed in keeping with the somewhat fantastic events that had preceded the climax; he felt the irony of chance more than the turn in his luck. As the bidding progressed and he realised that he might be able to pay Miss Ellerton in full he had a sense of relief that rather surprised him; he had not appreciated, in the tension he had maintained to endure misfortune, the weight of his load of obligation. He began to be conscious of the pumping of his heart, but his face was as gravely calm as before.

At the fall of the auctioneer's hammer, with the announcement that Le Mark had been obliged to pay a moderately fair price—a sum sufficient to liquidate all indebtedness and to leave remaining a fortune almost equal to Emily's portion—Marshall experienced such a gratification as comes but seldom in any life. He was a little dazed, and he was obliged to steady himself not to show that he had been taken aback.



The morning's business over, Churchill went promptly to Marshall and grasped his hand, scrutinising his face to see how he was taking the issue of the sale. It was evident that Churchill himself was surprised and overjoyed at the result; he lacked the self-control of his chief. Notwithstanding his own satisfaction, he was uncertain—partly because his friend, on account of Miss Ellerton's relation to the affairs of the mill, had not lately been as open with him as formerly—how much Marshall had expected. The cordial grip and the frank smile that responded to Churchill's almost wistful expression were sufficiently reassuring. The two men were standing together, without as yet any attempt at speech, when Mr. Netherby and Mr. Brice came slowly down the room.

It takes a certain time, when the brain is excited and the first effort is at composure, for the mind to act in the sense of drawing deductions. Theodore had not arrived at speculation about the reason for his luck, but seeing Mr. Netherby and Mr. Brice side by side, associating as he did the Netherbys with Mary Ellerton, he started slightly, as it came to him that the runner-up at the sale must have been one of these two men, acting for the woman who seemed determined to save him. Mr. Brice passed with a simple recognition. Mr. Netherby paused an instant, looked oddly up at Churchill, nodded, and would have gone on if Churchill had not stepped forward and without ado introduced Marshall, who at the moment was far from fluent.

Mr. Netherby was at first inarticulate; then, eye-

ing Marshall as a tame crow looks furtively at the tail of a kitten, he said:

"All over, young man; sold out; bought up; what do you think? Look able to take care of yourself. Never mind me; I'm odd, you know. Very pretty fellow you are; good luck to you! good-bye."

Marshall laughed. "Good-bye, sir," he said. Then to Churchill: "One of those men has been running up Le Mark. Walk along with them and see if you can find out what they were trying to do."

Until his lieutenant was out of sight, Marshall stood looking after him, seeing nothing, then he turned to go. An ear at his lips would have heard an exclamation and a single sentence. "By God! she is a splendid girl!" This young man was not given to profanity even under severe stress; but occasions arise when an oath is almost an invocation—possibly some one has said as much before, never mind, the phrase serves. Marshall's language was indicative of the deep feeling with which he regarded the fact that the woman whose aid he had rejected with a firmness barely courteous had nevertheless made him a well-to-do man instead of a debtor, and performed this act of kindness in a way that left him not pecuniarily in debt to her—left him almost without opportunity to acknowledge her skilful interference.

Churchill joined the men he had been sent to question; he made one or two feeble attempts to execute his commission, but he was shaken off peremptorily and had no choice but to retire.

Mr. Netherby went straight to Miss Ellerton to report. She had stayed in town,—to the surprise

of her friends,—refusing to fix a time for her departure. She had again taken the cottage at Cape Ann; when she intended to occupy it no one could find out—not even Mrs. Thane.

Mary greeted Mr. Netherby with a sharp invitation to exhibit his budget. He responded with a provoking grin; he was maliciously deliberate and equivocal; he shook his head in mock weariness, as implying frustrated hopes and sadness at the contumacy of facts.

The lady showed impatience with her foot—a way she had.

“Yes, yes, dear lady; give me time, Sultana; your slave is spent. What a task! to encounter the great Gorilla—in his habitat! To meet him with bare hands; to snatch the babe from his grasp! It is done; he’s a gone coon; lost his victim; up a tree, or I am out of my reckoning.”

“Dear Mr. Netherby,” Mary said softly, with the air of a patient angel, “you are so happy in your metaphors and so—lucid. Don’t hurry; let me get you a glass of water.”

Mr. Netherby made a grimace and looked at her for half a minute, as if revolving many things in his mind. Then he came to the point.

“We did it—clean as a whistle; ran him up to the railroad’s price and the amount of his bond less four thousand. He bid seven-ninety-six, with the hammer falling to the block. I thought he was n’t going to—my spine like an icicle; but he did; we stopped; he has the mill; with a trifling loss of forty-six thousand on the transaction.”

"You dear!"

Mr. Netherby coughed. "Something about my commission, was n't there? Let you out; save your money; a trifle of cash for a young man's pocket; you were to give me—let me see—'touching evidence of affection'?"

"With Mrs. Netherby's permission, Mr. Netherby."

"Oh, well! I'll telegraph to Manchester this afternoon"; and he did. He showed Mary the answer the next time they met; it was brief—"Yes, if you put me down in M. L.'s book for twenty-five thousand for art museum."

Mary read this yellow, diplomatic communication, put it and her hands behind her, and faced the victim.

"Now; are you ready?"

The victim squirmed: "Word of honour, can't afford it. Weather has been too wet; potato seed rotting in the ground; corn has no chance; we'll make it twelve if you give me both hands."

They flew out to him and were kissed as if they had been a queen's.

It is not pleasant to turn from these two partly civilised beings to another person less agreeable, but in following the story of events sequent to the foreclosure of the mortgage, we are obliged to go back to Mr. Fergus Frank. After his brief interview with Le Mark he had waited outside for Marshall, whom he joined, congratulating him without hesitation. He had seen the game and he knew that Marshall's pocket was the bank; that the bank had fared well. Le Mark had lost; Mr. Netherby had not won; the win-

nings were for the former owner of the premises. They had walked but half a block when Frank said:

"My apologies if I am intruding, but I have a reason for wanting to know whether you are satisfied to be quit of your mill on the conditions that now exist or whether you would like to venture the surplus you will have in another attempt to run it."

"I am afraid I shall have to 'stand' as I am," Theodore answered, "at least for the present. It is not likely that Le Mark paid more than he thinks he can get back. I cannot run the place without working capital, and I shall not have much more than would answer for that—let alone buying back the property."

Frank looked keenly at Marshall, then spoke carefully.

"To begin with, Le Mark has paid more than he expects to get,—more than he will get, I think. I have reason to believe that he sold before he bought, which is a dangerous thing to do, as some of our great men have pointed out. Then, I am tolerably sure that our mighty Le Mark will listen attentively to any proposition we may put before him. Again, if you do not want to chuck the mill and make a new start in something else, why not take a lease of it with a privilege of buying later on?"

Theodore deliberated before speaking, and Frank, without waiting for a reply, went back to his point.

"All I want to know now is this: are you done? Or, if you can hire the place on favourable terms for a number of years, with an option to buy, do you care

to risk your money? If you wish to go on, I will see if I can get a proposal for you to consider."

Marshall's old impatience at the way in which other people undertook to manage his affairs asserted itself for a moment and made him delay his answer. Then he reflected that on the whole he had not much reason to complain on that score. He laughed shortly and said:

"Yes, I will go on, if the terms offered are satisfactory, but I commit myself to nothing as long as there is nothing definite proposed."

Frank stopped. "That is all; thank you. When I have something definite to say I will let you know." He waved to Theodore and left him.

We said that Fergus had watched the game; he had done so to some purpose. Without precise information he had learned that there was a syndicate acting in a deal for the transfer of the Marshall mill to the M. & L. E. R. R. Co.; that the entire programme had been arranged; and as he watched Le Mark, during the bidding, he surmised that the astute gentleman from the Seneca Building was in a trap. Brice and Mr. Netherby were torturing him. That was evident, and it warmed the cockles of the Democratic heart to assist as a spectator at this pleasing performance.

Long ago Frank had suspected that Miss Ellerton's interest in Marshall accounted for the readiness of Mr. Brice to lend the young man money. The telegraphing between Brice and Mr. Netherby, as plain to him from where he stood in the room as to the auctioneer, suggested to his quick mind that Mr.

Netherby was the source from which money had come. That this gentleman should take the risks of bidding high enough to protect himself was intelligible. But Frank knew that Marshall had borrowed only about a hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars; why, then, force Le Mark to the last notch, to a perilous height where every step seemed his last? Mr. Netherby might know more than he, Frank, knew and might have personal reasons for exerting pressure to the uttermost. Fergus was sure that Le Mark's latest bid would have been his last, even if the other side had ventured only another dollar.

He had thrown his soul into a warning, conveyed by the eye alone, to Mr. Netherby. The "No" that followed from the front row seemed an indication that the danger signal had been seen. Mr. Netherby did not want the mill; he had meant to harry Le Mark. The little gentleman with the odd, fatigued face and queer clothes was no friend of Le Mark's. "*Le pauvre, petit, richissime* Netherby," as he had been called by some one, venturing upon French for the sake of the last adjective, was a person Frank hoped to find useful.

The next question was how to get hold of Mr. Netherby; he lived in the country and was reputed inaccessible. But would not Miss Ellerton, who was still in town, Fergus knew, want to hear about the sale? Doubtless; the man he wanted was probably at that moment telling his story to the young woman.

Fergus went to a telephone station and, consulting the subscribers' book, found that Mrs. Thane's name was there. He called her number, and when asked,

"Who is it?" answered, "Mr. Marshall's counsel. I want to know if Mr. Netherby is there. I have something important to say to him."

The butler did not give a very satisfactory rendering of this message to the persons in the small parlour. Mr. Netherby declared that he could not use a telephone; had never learned; did n't mean to; "infernal nuisance!" Mary went herself to the instrument. She came back looking concerned.

"It is Mr. Fergus Frank; he says he has been acting as Mr. Marshall's adviser; that he wants to see you as soon as possible about a matter connected with the sale of the steel works—a matter of great importance."

"There, there, there! what have I to do with the sale? Why don't he go to the Gorilla or the babe? Other people's business; put your foot in it every time. How in the world did he know I was here? He may go hang; my compliments; have n't been here; have nothing to do with the affairs of seller or buyer; busy man; must be excused."

"Something may have happened, Mr. Netherby."

"Nothing can have happened unless Gorilla is broke and can't pay. By the tomb of the prophet! I fancy that's it. Chuckled too soon, eh? Never mind; Gorilla is smashed; young man will live."

"But I do mind—very much."

Mr. Netherby looked abominably cross.

"'Nor shake your gory locks at me'; must, must I? Enlisted for the war; honour binds; tell the intrusive puppy to go to my house in town—in an hour."

There was always some one in the Netherby town



house. After persistent ringing Frank was admitted by an old woman who did not appear to fully credit his assurance that he had an appointment then and there with Mr. Netherby. The elderly person was in and out of the hall continually until the master of the house arrived; she had no idea of giving the visitor any opportunities for plunder except over her dead body.

Mr. Netherby nodded curtly and led the way to a small reception room. He opened a window, motioned to a chair, and sat down himself, leaving the opening of the conversation to the person who had sought the interview.

Fergus cast about in his mind for a way to begin. He was forced to speak before he had found a natural introduction to his business. In fact, he did not know precisely what his business was; he wanted help, but he did not know yet in what form it could be given by the man before him.

"Mr. Netherby," he said, "may I ask what motive you had in bidding so high for the Marshall property?"

"No, sir, you may not; fail to see—what is it? Interview for newspaper? I did n't bid. Off your track. Glad to have seen you; good-bye."

"One moment, Mr. Netherby. Are you not a friend of Mr. Marshall?"

"No, sir, never met him in my life until to-day."

"Can you tell me whom Mr. Brice represented at the sale this morning?"

"Brice not dead, is he? or gone off? What do you mean coming to me about Brice's business?"

Fergus had to laugh at his own discomfiture; he abandoned diplomatic methods and plunged.

"Mr. Netherby, just listen a minute and you may get an idea as to what I am after. I believe Le Mark means to sell the Marshall place to the M. & L. E. I don't like Le Mark and I have been looking up some of his past history. I think I can persuade him not to sell the property, but lease it to Mr. Marshall on favourable terms, if Marshall wants to try again. Does this interest you?"

"No, sir. Damn Marshall! what have I got to do with him?"

"I wish I knew," Fergus said, with some annoyance, "whether Marshall has any friends willing to stand by him. I think I can do what I like with Le Mark; I know Marshall wants to tackle the mill again; I know some one was interested in keeping him going. A little help now would start him again in good shape."

"You think young man wants to put his head back in same old collar?"

"I am sure; I have his word for it."

"More fool he." Mr. Netherby looked at his watch. "Why don't you see Brice? Afraid I am taking your time for nothing." Mr. Netherby grinned pleasantly.

"It looks a little that way, Mr. Netherby," Fergus responded rather dejectedly. "I can see Mr. Brice, but I know he is acting only as an agent. I wanted to see his principal; some one to tell me whether it is worth while to squeeze Le Mark; to tell me what to demand of him. I want to make a proposal to Marshall, and I want advice."

"That all? Why don't you throw in a roc's egg among your wants? Should n't wonder if there's a roc's egg in the house, but Le Mark is n't here, nor Marshall, nor advice, to best of my knowledge and belief."

Fergus gave it up. "Well, I am much obliged, Mr. Netherby. I need not say that what I have said about Le Mark was in the strictest confidence. I am sorry to have bothered you. I wish you good-morning."

When Fergus was gone, Mr. Netherby found some paper and wrote two notes. One ran:

DEAR MR. BRICE:

If you are asked about assistance in arranging for lease, understand there is a *man* ready to make moderate loan on fair security, or otherwise assist, without flagrant risks.

J. N.

The word "man" was underlined. The other note was still more brief:

Situation unchanged, except more thorns for Gorilla.

Mr. Netherby rang for a messenger, dispatched his letters, and went back to "The Farm."

Late in the afternoon Fergus Frank called upon Mr. Brice. He did not say that he had means of influencing Mr. Le Mark. He merely stated a hypothetical case. On the supposition that Le Mark did not sell the Marshall works, but would lease on fair terms, did Mr. Brice know of any one sufficiently interested in the matter to guarantee the payment of rent, provided a guarantee was required, and Marshall could show that the risk incurred in so doing

was slight. Mr. Brice could not answer definitely, but he was willing to consider any reasonable proposal. He did not mind saying that he believed he knew of people who were able and would be willing to assist Mr. Marshall, if they could do so without much risk of ultimate loss. He found more difficulty in getting Mr. Marshall to accept assistance than in finding people ready to hold up his hands.

At his own rooms Fergus found a brief communication from Le Mark, signifying that Mr. Frank could see him at his house that evening at half after eight o'clock.

Le Mark had had a sorry day. The morning had brought disappointment, anguish of spirit. The afternoon had been given to an examination of his affairs and to an endless series of combinations and permutations arranged with a view to raising more money without dangerous sacrifices. His brain was tired when he went home for dinner; he was thoroughly discouraged and incapable of thinking clearly. His girls were away; he dined alone, dejected and forlorn. He had just poured himself a stiff nip of whiskey and water, after the soup, when a note and a package were brought to him at table.

The note was in a woman's hand.

MY DEAR SIR:

I send you some papers that will diminish, it is to be hoped, the regret with which you recall an episode in your life. It is not always that one is fortunate enough completely to suppress incriminating documents.

MERCY THOMAS.

Le Mark could not have been more shaken if he had discovered poison in the glass he was about to put to

his lips. All the afternoon he had been haunted by a vague dread of what was to come from Fergus Frank. Now, for a little, it seemed to him that he surely knew what to expect. There was a hint of menace in the note he had just read. He was seized with a terror that would not at first make any concessions to reason. He put more whiskey into the glass and drank. Little by little he recovered some command of his mind. He dwelt upon certain facts and forced himself to estimate probabilities. He was measurably reassured, but he could not throw off a sense of impending trouble; he could not eat. He had a second cup of black coffee and lit a cigar. He had scarcely thrown his match on the empty hearth and squared his shoulders, as he stood before the mantelpiece, scowling in an effort to reassert himself to himself, when a card was brought to him:

**"MR. FERGUS FRANK."**

## Chapter XXXIV

### FERGUS FRANK TAKES A HAND

If we could see the lines of force the resultant of which is an end desired, there would be less vanity about personal contributions.

**F**ERGUS FRANK was shown to Le Mark's library; he was received with husks of politeness, covering a brutal incivility. Le Mark's eyes, yellow about the whites, dulled, restless, disliking, were offensive. He was smoking; he failed in the small hospitality of offering his visitor a cigar. Fergus, remembering an anecdote of Bismarck, took a cigar from his pocket and lit it at a lamp standing upon the table. Le Mark watched in savage silence. Fergus seated himself across from where Le Mark stood near the corner of the table, and entered with deliberation upon his business.

"I said this morning, sir, that I wanted to see you before you disposed of the property you have just purchased. I shall presently, on behalf of a client, lay before you a proposal; but before doing so I must trespass upon your patience by telling a rather long story—one with which you are intimately concerned. The facts are mostly of your own knowledge, although some are not. If I am inaccurate in details I trust you will be kind enough to correct me.

"In 1892 you were in treaty for the sale of the Marshall Iron and Steel Works to a corporation, the shares of which, or at least a portion of them, were to be marketed by the International Investment Company. The late John Marshall, the then owner of the works, was to have received eight hundred thousand dollars and one-fifth of the stock of the new company. He was to manage the works for three years and to be paid one per cent. upon the receipts for merchandise sold, or a salary of \$12,000 a year, at the option of the directors."

Frank paused. "I am correct in this statement, am I not?" he added.

Le Mark, who was now seated, brought his hand heavily down upon the table and said fiercely, "Will you get to your business, sir?"

"Yes, presently; I warned you I had a long story to tell. When the negotiations were nearly ripe and little remained except to execute the papers, you called at Mr. Marshall's office on the 13th of October, 1892, and proposed to enter into a private arrangement with Marshall, according to which he as manager, and you as chairman of the board of direction were to shape the policy of the projected company. Your plan looked to an extreme conservatism; you considered it more important to strengthen the producing capacity of the works than to use the earnings for dividends. You stood ready, if your sagacity was not appreciated by the shareholders, to back your judgment by taking over the shares of impatient investors at market values or thereabouts. Before the interview of the 13th of October ended, you made to

Mr. Marshall a complete and explicit statement of your proposals. He asked you to be good enough to call again on the day but one following.

"On the 15th you made another visit to the works. On consideration Mr. Marshall disapproved of the course you had so clearly outlined, and the disagreement between you and him was so complete as to end in a rupture of your personal relations and the abandonment of the entire scheme for incorporating the works. Mr. Marshall was even violent. He insisted, by a threat of laying your sketch of policy before the board of the Investment Company, upon your signing a stenographic report, made by Miss Sarah V. Rand, of the entire interview of October 13th."

Fergus paused again. Le Mark was quivering with anger; his lower lip was no longer under his control, his eyes were blood-shot, a dark flush empurpled his face.

"You are playing a dangerous game, you scoundrel," he said hoarsely, and glared at his tormentor.

"I know it, Mr. Le Mark, and I play it very carefully. I shall play it to the end.

"Mr. Marshall engaged not to use the facts set forth in the papers you signed unless you should be detected in some attempt to injure him or others known to him. In your presence Mr. Marshall put the stenographic report—signed by you—in the drawer at the upper left-hand corner of the safe in his private office, shut the safe door, twirled the button, and, turning to you, said, 'Good-afternoon, Mr. Le Mark.' You are suffering, sir, shall I ring the bell? Would you not like a stimulant?"



Le Mark's eyes turned slowly upon Frank, like the red eyes of a sullen mastiff, but he said nothing. Frank went on.

"Early in 1896 Mr. Marshall was instantly killed by an accident. Before he was buried—on the 20th of February, to be exact—you advertised for a stenographer and typewriter in the *Morning Journal*—salary—twenty dollars a week. Miss Rand received a copy of the *Journal* of that date with the advertisement marked. She answered it and you offered to engage her. You saw her alone in your inner office. You told her of your position in Morchester, of your devotion to the public good, of the scandalous manner in which Mr. Marshall had constrained you—by entrapping you into statements that, although dangerous, almost criminal, as they appeared, were not meant to express anything but a wise conservatism—to sign papers that might, falling into the hands of persons ignorant of all the circumstances, completely ruin you in public estimation and render futile the great plans for the improvement of Morchester then maturing in your mind.

"You represented to her that a report of a private interview between you and another person belonged as much to you as to him; that upon his death it belonged to you. You talked to her about her family, you learned that her father was an unwilling drunkard. You kindly offered to secure his admittance to a sanitorium where he could stay without expense until cured of his abnormal desire. You were on the board of managers of the sanitorium; it was one of the many charities to which you gave time

and money. You again spoke of your papers in the upper left-hand drawer of Mr. Marshall's safe. You assured her that Mr. Theodore Marshall did not know of their existence, because, although the father was a violent and wrong-headed man, he could be depended upon to keep a secret he had promised to guard, even from his son. Finally, you besought her to save you from undeserved ruin and shame. You deceived her and she fell; she stole the papers and you took her into your service."

Le Mark rose from his chair and moved towards the bell on the wall. He turned and faced Fergus; he was livid of countenance, trembling with passion; his hand was on the bell-pull.

"You have mistaken your man, sir. You dastardly blackmailer, how dare you come here with this preposterous tissue of lies! Now, sir, I give you your choice between signing a paper I shall dictate or of leaving this house in custody. I have a police-call in the house. Take your choice and be quick about it. If I ring I shall not give you a choice; I will put you where you belong."

"You won't ring, Mr. Le Mark," Fergus said, looking up with a somewhat cynical smile. "I have a press copy of the papers Miss Rand brought you from the safe. I have her confession, attested by a notary; and I have not agreed to compound her felony. I can arrest her to-morrow without breach of faith."

Le Mark glared at Fergus and hesitated. Fergus resumed his narrative, while the elder man walked between the chimney and the bell.

"Mr. Marshall knew that you were a dangerous

enemy. He took the precaution of taking press copies of all the papers in the case and of putting them away in his house. Miss Thomas found them, and we have felt that your scheme to confiscate the works for a mortgage of a few hundred thousand—a debt of about half what they brought at public sale—constitutes an attempt to injure one known to Mr. John Marshall. We do not feel, therefore, that the son is bound to secrete the papers. We cannot but feel that he is quite at liberty to use them in securing Miss Rand's conviction for larceny. Nevertheless, I hope to lay the press copies before you, Mr. Le Mark, signature and all, in the course of a few days. They are very convincing, I assure you."

Conviction was already dawning upon the mind of the victim. He saw that the trial of Miss Rand for larceny would bring all the evidence of his own rascality before the public in a way to deprive him of the advantage to be derived from alleging a black-mailing conspiracy, and he was by no means confident that he could escape indictment himself. If Frank was sure of his ground, which seemed likely or he would not have dared to threaten, there was obviously no way out except by paying. Le Mark groaned inwardly at the thought of having to find more money, but recognising at last that browbeating and indignation would be of no further use; knowing that he was now fighting for his life with a dangerously cool antagonist, he made a strong effort at self-control. He took again the chair he had left, leant his head for a moment on his hand—elbow on table—and then looked up. He was mendacious to the last.

"There is not an atom of truth in your story, sir. I do not admit for a moment that there is, but if it is a fact that you have debauched one of my employees and persuaded her to join you in a conspiracy to defame me; if the unfortunate girl is in danger, and I have got, at my time of life, worn with my efforts to advance the well-being of my fellow citizens, to combat a terrible charge that cannot be disproved in public without a wretched scandal, I may, if I am not pressed too far, prefer to come to some terms with you, sir. What do you wish to propose?"

"My proposal is a very reasonable one, Mr. Le Mark."

"Well, sir?"

"You are now the owner of the Marshall Iron and Steel Works. I want you to lease it to Mr. Theodore Marshall, giving him an option to buy it at a fixed price."

Le Mark could not help starting. He stared at Frank and then threw himself back in his chair.

"You are mad, sir. It is quite impossible. You have come to me, broken by incessant labours, to extort what you can. But I must tell you plainly that you cannot get more than I am able to give. I am not able to incur the losses that would be involved in the course you propose. I could not accede to your demands and meet my obligations. You might as well knock down the first person met in the streets and ask for a million in bank-notes, to be handed over before you allow your prey to arise."

"I don't think I follow you, Mr. Le Mark. I am not asking you to make a gift. You bid seven hun-

dred and ninety-six thousand dollars. The interest on that sum at five per cent. is thirty-nine thousand eight hundred dollars. If you lease the works for, say, forty thousand, you will get a very fair return for your money—as things are going."

"But where am I to find eight hundred thousand dollars?"

"Where did you expect to find it when you bought the property?"

Le Mark stared at the enemy again and groaned aloud.

Frank went on. "If you need, I think you can arrange a mortgage for, perhaps, six hundred thousand. Possibly Mr. Marshall would be willing to take some of the bonds. The rest can be easily placed. You can certainly find two hundred thousand dollars, with an assurance of a rental that will pay the interest. There will be the taxes, of course, but they were moderate until this year. The valuation has been increased by some freak of the assessors; you can, with your influence, have the error corrected."

Le Mark winced.

"What assurance shall I have that the rent will be paid? How can the young man pay rent? He could not keep afloat when he owned the place."

"True; but let us suppose that you will have a satisfactory guarantee that the rent will be paid."

"You are defeating your own ends, sir. This is a case where to be greedy means that you will go empty."

"I have but a single end, Mr. Le Mark—to obtain a lease of the mill for Mr. Marshall; upon this I must

insist: You will find a way, I trust, to do the necessary financiering. I shall expect to hear from you within a few days. I am afraid Miss Rand cannot report for duty at present; please accept her excuses. I wish you good-night."

Fergus bowed stiffly and went from the room, leaving Le Mark to make of the situation what he could.

That same evening Frank went to Grove Street. He found there Theodore and Emily Marshall, Miss Thomas, and the Churchills. They had all been talking about the sale, and the arrival of Fergus, fresh from a meeting with Le Mark, was an event of immense interest. He was assailed with questions from all sides. It was not his cue, however, to be too open about his method of dealing with Le Mark. He doubted if Marshall would sanction his use of Miss Rand and of the papers found by Miss Thomas in precisely the way he was trying to employ them. He meant to make the most of the weapons within reach; Marshall would not have assented to anything not prescribed in a punctilious code. Fergus, therefore, had little to tell except that Mr. Le Mark had not refused to entertain the idea of a lease; that, if he could manage to find money to pay for the mill, the rest might be arranged. Fergus expressed doubt whether Le Mark, with the best intentions, could pay and retain the mill even if he had a tenant.

The transposition by which Le Mark would become owner and mortgagor, and Marshall mortgagee and lessee, retaining control of the works, appealed to the imagination of the women, and nothing could have suited Marshall better than the prospect of again

trying conclusions, under somewhat better conditions, with the old problems. But he could not see sufficient grounds for an expectation that the plan might be carried out. He was therefore rather chilling to the enthusiasm of his friends.

It was late when the party broke up, and very late before Miss Thomas slept. She had contrived a few moments' talk aside with Fergus Frank, who had told her briefly of his pursuit of Mr. Netherby and of his interview with Brice. He had mentioned confidentially his belief that Miss Ellerton was at the bottom of the will to assist Marshall, shown by unknown persons, when the mill was running, and he offered as evidence of the truth of this theory the fact that immediately after the sale Mr. Netherby was at Mrs. Thane's house. Miss Ellerton was the principal, Mr. Brice the agent, Mr. Netherby the go-between. The same group of people had forced Le Mark and saved Marshall from insolvency.

Miss Thomas when alone had abundant food for thought. In the light of Frank's theory, she saw in new aspects many things that had puzzled her—Theodore's reticence recently about his affairs; the infrequency of his visits to the Lawrences; the obvious interest of Miss Ellerton in Theodore; the sudden collapse of the business. She was unable to trace a definite outline of what had been happening, but she felt that she had at least a vague impression of the truth; that at any moment she might have an illuminating thought, throwing into clear relief an interesting history. This is one of the states of mind inconsistent with a ready surrender to sleep.

Whatever the counsel brought to Miss Thomas by the night, it is to be recorded that as early the next morning as was decent she called upon Miss Ellerton. They were excellent comrades, with perhaps more in common intellectually than any other two of our Morchester friends. It was not unnatural that Miss Thomas should call, not unnatural that she should talk of the great event of the day before. One thing led to another, and although, for the life of her Miss Thomas could not decide whether or not she was talking to a lady who would probably be Marshall's wife, Miss Ellerton was allowed to understand, as a profound secret, that there had been old relations, touching the mill, between the elder Marshall and Le Mark, the facts of which were not such as Le Mark would wish to have exhibited to the public; that papers had been found important in this connection, that Mr. Fergus Frank was acquainted with the details and had seen Le Mark, who was considering leasing the mill to Mr. Marshall; but the whole project might fall through because Le Mark was so much embarrassed—in a monetary sense—that, with the strongest motives for falling in with Mr. Frank's proposals, it might be quite impossible for him to do so. This was as far as the conversation went, with the mill for a theme. The two ladies talked of many other things, and Miss Thomas went home no wiser than the night before, although she had imparted information that was highly interesting to Miss Ellerton.

Although the day was very warm and the morning well advanced, Miss Ellerton ordered her horse and



again rode out to Box-Walk Farm. In leaving Mr. Netherby, her last words, said impressively, as she leant down from the saddle and used her whip for emphasis, were: "Tell him I will sell him my farm at a price fixed by you two." Mr. Netherby called a second time upon Mr. Craft.

It was nearly two hours after luncheon-time when, still in her riding-habit, hot and slightly dishevelled, but with the light of achievement in her eye, Miss Ellerton asked her aunt's butler for a bite of something, it did not matter what,—on a tray,—to be sent to her sitting-room.

Mr. Fergus Frank had personally taken more pains to ascertain the truth about Miss Rand's abstraction of papers from Mr. Marshall's safe than gentlemen are commonly willing to take in such a case. He had ascertained that Mr. Le Mark dismissed his typewriter at one o'clock on Saturdays; that usually she went directly home and dressed before making use of her half-holiday for shopping or for junketing. Frank called upon Miss Rand one Saturday afternoon at about half-past two. He explained that in view of the impending sale of the Marshall works it was of interest to know the history of the negotiations in 1892 between the late Mr. Marshall and Mr. Le Mark. He touched in the lightest possible way upon one or two matters about which he could not have known at all unless he knew a good deal.

With perfect courtesy and an apparent gentle consideration for Miss Rand, he succeeded in piquing her curiosity and in awakening in her mind a multitude of terrors. He told her incidentally of the difficulties

Marshall had been encountering, of how the young mill owner was threatened with the loss of his property. He came to Le Mark and asked Miss Rand, rather suddenly, what she thought of him. Miss Rand had learned to hate her master; Frank's question had reached to the quick. The girl flushed and stammered. Then Fergus told her what he thought of Le Mark. He told her that her employer was deliberately wrecking Marshall's business; that it was now too late to avert disaster, although something could be saved if some old papers concerning the correspondence of 1892 could be identified. Miss Rand finally promised to call at Frank's office to look at the papers in question.

The girl had a guilty conscience; she was afraid to keep her promise, and she did not dare to break it. She arrived in a state of nervous excitement. By skilful management, and the use at the right moment of the press copies found by Miss Thomas, Miss Rand was played upon until she broke down and told the whole story of the interviews between Mr. Marshall and Le Mark, between Le Mark and herself. She confessed to the theft and threw herself upon the mercy of the people she had wronged. Fergus persuaded her to make a confession before a notary,—one of the clerks in his office,—and, without promising her immunity, he left her with a hope of escape that made her as wax in his hands. He forbade her to give any one, much less Le Mark, an intimation of what had taken place between them. He told her that at any time she might hear from him; that upon notice from him, she must keep away from Le Mark and out of

his reach. He could not guarantee that she would escape the consequences of her guilty act, but her only chance of doing so lay in implicit obedience. To be doubly safe, Fergus detailed a man to watch Miss Rand and to report her movements.

Le Mark's reputation, possibly his liberty, were at the disposal of the one who loved him least, where few could be said to think of him with kindness. His case would have been hopeless if Fergus had not been more interested in doing Marshall a good turn than in smashing Le Mark. And, strange to say, it was hard for the fierce Democrat to comprehend why this was. Not long before, he had been all hate and fury; he would have sacrificed a dozen Marshalls to have convicted Le Mark. Now his interest was to save Marshall and he was almost ready to pity Le Mark. He was very eager to restore Marshall to the mill, if the mill could not be restored to Marshall. He had made a combination and he wanted to see it succeed. It would, he felt, if Le Mark should be able to meet the demands upon him called for by the scheme; if he absolutely could not, why, he could not; "and so there," like the corpse of Malbrouck, "the thing remained."

Fergus waited feverishly to hear from Brice or Le Mark. Nearly a week passed, and then, as it happened, he heard from both by the same mail, asking him to call. He went first to see Mr. Brice, who astonished him with the information that Mr. John Craft was ready to guarantee the payment of a rental of forty thousand dollars in case Mr. Marshall took the Marshall Iron and Steel Works for five years,

provided that, if Mr. Marshall was unable to pay the rent he would assign to Mr. Craft an option—to buy the works for eight hundred and fifty thousand dollars—that Mr. Le Mark, Mr. Brice understood, was willing to incorporate in the lease. Further, Mr. Brice was informed that Le Mark had consented to the lease. As was his habit, Mr. Brice was not communicative beyond a certain point.

Frank was received by Le Mark in the private office in which Marshall had waited unregarded while the great man signed letters, in the office where Miss Rand had been cajoled into committing a crime. Le Mark was haggard, but in less excitement than at their previous interview. He seemed for the time to have laid aside his self-assertive manner. He appeared to be somewhat chastened, as if he had lately been corrected by a power before which he perforce was more or less humble.

“Mr. Frank,” he said slowly, as though picking his words, “you asked me to arrange to lease the Marshall property to its former owner. I could not then see my way to doing so. I have since effected some readjustments in my affairs that will enable me to comply with your request upon the terms you yourself suggested. Mr. Craft has agreed to furnish the necessary guarantee as to the rent, and to stand, as it were, between Mr. Marshall and myself. You are ready, I do not doubt, to surrender to me the papers of which you spoke in a recent interview, and to give a pledge that Miss Rand will not be molested.”

Fergus hesitated; he had no doubt Marshall would surrender the papers, but he was not sure. He said:

"I think so, but I cannot, of course, speak positively without consulting my principal."

Le Mark started; the angry flush returned for a moment to his face and his voice hardened and grew rougher.

"Do you mean to say that your principal has not already consented to give up the papers; that you have not been acting for him all along?"

"Yes, Mr. Le Mark, I have been acting for Mr. Marshall in the sense of trying to be of use to him, but I did not have his consent to giving you the papers. I did not need his consent to have a warrant issued for Miss Rand."

Le Mark gasped. He said coldly:

"You had better get his assent immediately. I cannot wait for it more than twenty-four hours. I have made enormous sacrifices to meet your views; you will be guilty of a shocking breach of good faith if you fail in your part of the bargain. Good-morning, sir."

Fergus went away in considerable perplexity. But there was no doubt as to what he should do; he must hunt up Marshall at once. He found him at an athletic club—fresh from the swimming pool, after an hour's boxing. Fergus explained, and asked leave to pledge the surrender of the papers. Marshall refused; he went further; he stood over Fergus and said:

"Now, look here, Frank, I don't know what you have been doing. I cannot see, for the life of me, why you should undertake to do business for me without a commission to do so, but we will let that pass. This I want you to understand: I do not propose to use

papers that incriminate Le Mark to extort a bargain from him. I do not propose to give him those papers because I love my fellow man or because he concedes something to me. I mean to keep them as my father kept them: as my father did I will give my word, in writing if necessary, not to use them to Le Mark's injury unless he forces me to club him for some villainy. I am very much obliged to you and to Craft. I should like to take the mill, but not as blackmail. I never will prosecute Miss Rand, and that is all I have to say about it."

Marshall plunged again into the pool. Frank could not talk to him from the edge, when the man to be persuaded was half the time head and all under water, and Marshall would not come out. The lawyer went off very much out of temper. He had to see Le Mark again. Their interview was brief and stormy.

Fergus reported his conversation with Marshall. Le Mark was scandalised.

"Do you mean, sir, that after the horrible extortion to which you have subjected me that you now intend to cheat me?"

Fergus answered with heat:

"I never promised you the papers. I said I hoped to lay them before you; I can do that, if it will give you pleasure to see them—if you doubt their existence. I believe that I did give you to understand that I was acting for Mr. Marshall. I was, in a sense, but I am obliged to say that he will not use the papers as I would willingly, if they were mine. He will not take the works if it appears that you are being forced, but I am not so sure that I shall not put Miss Rand

in the dock if this thing falls through. I can do that without Marshall. As for the papers, you know well enough, Mr. Le Mark, that you can trust the younger Marshall as fully as you could his father."

Le Mark walked up and down the room in fury. It made no difference now, he knew in his heart, in the issue of the business, whether Marshall would or would not part with the papers. He had counted upon getting them, because it had never occurred to him that Marshall would not use them for compelling purposes; he had supposed that Fergus was acting for Marshall, and he knew that an intimation from Marshall that they would be put in his hands would be acted upon unfailingly if the conditions specified were fulfilled.

Le Mark had gone too far with Craft to withdraw now. It had been agreed between them, the initiative in the negotiations being taken by Mr. Craft, that Le Mark should be relieved of the Park-Side Improvement Company, of his stock, and all the obligations belonging to it. Without going into details it is enough to say that Mr. Craft took Mr. Le Mark's place, taking over the properties acquired by the company at what they had cost, and paying one hundred thousand dollars for the franchise, goodwill, and so on. It was a condition of this arrangement that Le Mark was to remain the owner of the steel works and lease it to Marshall upon the terms already mentioned. The whole business had been much facilitated by an offer from Miss Ellerton to sell her farm to Mr. Craft, if the plan as outlined was carried out.

Le Mark finally turned upon Fergus and said wrathfully:

"Am I to understand that you pledge yourself to keep hands off if the lease goes through; to return to Miss Rand her confession; to give a solemn assurance that you will not molest her?"

"Oh, yes," Fergus answered; "I am quite ready to do all that, if the lease is satisfactory."

"Well, sir, let me again bid you good-day. Mr. Craft has a draft of the lease; you had better call upon him."

The next morning Fergus called once more upon Mr. Brice. He said he had seen Le Mark and had been referred to Mr. Craft for details, but unfortunately he had reason to believe that Mr. Craft would not see him. The matter was awkward, as Marshall was difficult to manage; he did not think Mr. Marshall would go to Mr. Craft unless asked to do so, and he thought this fact would not occur to Craft, who would be expecting Marshall. Everything was likely to be hung up because he, Frank, had been acting for Marshall without any real authority to represent him.

Mr. Brice was unequal to finding a way out of this difficulty, and Fergus went off realising more fully than ever the imprudence of meddling, with a benevolent intent. Two days later he received a letter addressed in a woman's hand. The envelope contained a blank sheet, folded once, and inside it one of Mr. John Craft's cards. On the back of the card was written, "Admit bearer, J. C."

Fergus made use of the card without delay. The first moments of the interview that resulted were so



gusty that the clerks in the outer office pricked up their ears at the noise audible through the heavy door. One youngster who went in with a telegram heard Duke John ask:

"Did Mr. Marshall give you this card?"

The stranger said, "No."

"Well, who did? or did you steal it?"

"I don't know who sent it to me. I supposed you did. It came to me in an envelope directed in a woman's hand. I have the envelope."

The clerk, shutting the door with unusual deliberation, saw Duke John take the envelope. He saw his Highness grin, and he heard, an instant before the door-latch clicked, a single word,—“Hell!”

When Fergus left Mr. Craft he was flushed, but he looked like a man who had made his point. That night there was great rejoicing among the Marshalls and Churchills. Fergus exhibited a pardonable pride. He did not give much thought to the many difficulties in the way of his plans that had melted as by magic. He had told Craft that the envelope was directed in a woman's hand: he failed to recognise how much had been directed by that woman's hand.

## Chapter XXXV

### TWO WOMEN

It is absurd to expect entire conformity to any rule supposed to be a law of human nature; what law of God or man or of man's imagining has not been broken by the human creature?

"NOT as all other women are" may be said of any woman, notwithstanding the stupid show of wisdom in assumptions that fundamentally women are as much alike as ants emerging from one hill. Mr. Pope said that at heart every woman is—so and so; others have lied as atrociously, if less glibly, in generalisations that in the nature of things cannot be true.

Unquestionably Miss Ellerton was not as all other women, although woman she was, from the arch of her instep to the tail of her eye—that faculty rather than actual appendage that permits a woman to see, without apparently looking, through so wide an angle that men, who are not so clever, associate the gift with uncanny powers lent by the ally thought by mediæval monkish persons to be always ready to come to a woman's assistance.

Miss Ellerton had escaped the involuntary acceptance of the rule that dependence is the proper

and natural condition of women. She had not been taught that she must look to some man to supply her, by the sweat of his brow, if he should not happen to have a fortune, with food, raiment, a dwelling, and as much more as his powers should be able to compass; that she must capture such a man, while preserving an appearance of not wanting him, an appearance of taking him only as a concession to his weakness in believing that he could not continue in life if she did not condescend to sit at the head of his table and to furnish a lap to receive his wages.

It is equally true that Margaret Lawrence was not an ordinary woman; she had matured in an atmosphere of sincerity and of devotion to the ideals that lend to life the greater part of the refinements that ennoble it. She had lived apart from the contentions that awake the old and savage instinct of rapacity. Her father could have made money; he preferred to be a student. Fortunately her mother had inherited enough property to make easy a family life that would otherwise have been pinched. Margaret had been trained to close domestic economy, but she had never lacked the generous diet for the soul that is hard to come by when an income is barely sufficient to feed the body. Her life had been simple, clean, and dignified. She had been nurtured in the best traditions of a time that is passing. The Lawrences had not been entrained in the confused currents of the later part of the century; they were out of fashion, it is true; a little quaint, perhaps, but in admirable taste.

Their house was like an old garden where one

gathers mignonette, lemon verbena, heliotrope, rose geranium, carnations, tea and moss roses. There were no new and striking plants cultivated in that close, with its not inhospitable privacy; there was little to be found there that owed its place to the fact that it was the mode; neither would you find gladiolus and old plants that once had vogue but never charm. Margaret herself, with her delicate purity of colouring and her eyes of varying depths of blue, suggested tea roses and heliotrope. It had hardly occurred to her that her part was that of the eucalyptus—to overcome the malarial of the world; rather she was sweet lavender for household linen, and winter violets, yielding their fragrance to the warmth of a room.

On one of the very last days of June, one of the last before the Lawrences flitted to the north, Miss Ellerton went to see Margaret. It was a brilliant, opulent day, revelling in a north-west air, a day full of the exuberant vigour of the lusty youth of summer. Margaret had been at work for hours; she had dressed and gone out to a bench under the trees to rest and to be alone. There Mary found her, and the two sat down together. They talked a little of unimportant things, as people will who have vital topics in mind and wait for a word, as for a match, to fire the train. Margaret made an allusion to the departure of the family and asked Mary when they might expect her. Mary put her hand on her friend's arm as it lay upon the back of the bench and said, looking closely at Margaret's face:

"I have something to tell you; we are not going to Cape Ann this summer; I have persuaded my aunt

to go abroad with me; we sail from New York at the end of next week. I do not wonder that you are surprised. I have not been behaving altogether well, Madge; I am a little ashamed of myself and it seems better to run away; to see if I can find diversion, until I have an easier mind. Tell me, dear, have you and Mr. Marshall come to an understanding?"

"Mr. Marshall! I have scarcely seen him for weeks; we shall never come to the understanding you mean; I thought," Margaret continued, smiling rather wanly, "that you and Mr. Marshall would find each other out. How does it come about that you have not?"

"Because, Madge, dear, he loves you, and he does not love me. Yes, I know it was unorthodox and a shameful lack of loyalty to you, but I am afraid I tried to make him love me. If I did try, I ignominiously failed. I admit that I liked him, Madge; I tried to help him secretly in his business. You will never tell this to any one, dear friend? I am rather well off—rich for a woman. I have money that does little good, that grows until I don't know what to do with it. I was vain enough to think that I could so manage as to let him use a part of my surplus without knowing where it came from. One day he called to see me and in his straightforward, downright way he made me acknowledge that I had been meddling in his affairs, took my secret from me as one takes stolen sweets from a child. I thought I was clever; that I could hold my own with any one. I might as well have matched myself with the Spanish Inquisition; he was too strong for me and quite ruthless. In

a few minutes he had turned me inside out; told me to mind my own business, and positively declined to listen to any compromise. He would take no favours from such as I, not he! The works must be sold at once and his debts to me paid as far as was possible; what he could not pay then he would pay when he could. He would not be in my debt a farthing's worth, if all he had in the world would make him free."

"Did you mind very much," Margaret asked, "that he found out what you were doing? I am so sorry if you did; I am afraid I gave him the clue."

"You! and how did you know?"

"I did not know. Fanny put the idea into my head and it grew until it seemed a fact."

"Fanny!"

"Yes. You let her help you one day when you were paying bills by cheques on Lawton & Haven. She said you had beautiful clothes and a horse and a cottage; you must be very rich; she wished you would help Mr. Marshall with some of your money. It was one evening when Mr. Churchill had been here. He had been talking a great deal about Mr. Marshall, and Fanny had been forgotten and listened. I went to see her after she had been sent to bed; it was then that she made her suggestion. Later I came upon you and Mr. Netherby. I overheard a few words that, although at the time I put them out of my head, I could not help recalling afterwards, nor help seeing what they must mean."

Miss Ellerton was looking down and poking a hole in the turf with the point of a sun umbrella.

"It was Russell Churchill who set Fanny's wits a working; Fanny who prompted you, Mr. Netherby who helped; you who told Mr. Marshall and brought me to confusion. It is odd how things come about, is n't it?"

As she ceased speaking she looked up; there was more interest—say, in the intricacies of life—in her expression than ill-humour or regret.

"I did not tell Mr. Marshall," Margaret said quickly. "I spoke of his friends; he said that if he had friends he would like to know who they were; I mentioned you; he was thinking of his business, of the people who had seemed willing to sustain it. He asked if I meant that you were his friend in that sense; I said no, I did not mean to say so. Mama came into the room at that moment and we did not go back to you, but I fancy he went away with an idea that had not occurred to him before—an idea I had given him. I am afraid I meant or at least wanted to give it to him. If you cared for him enough to risk your money in his business he had only to know it and to know you better to care for you." Margaret paused and then said more firmly, "If you two were not to love one another he ought not to have been using your money."

"So he seemed to think," Miss Ellerton remarked dryly, "but I do not see that in using it he suffered in reputation or estate as long as no one knew anything about it. It is conceivable that I might have tried to help Mr. Marshall without caring deeply—simply because of a taste for affairs, a fancy for what Mr. Le Mark would call 'larger interests.' Possibly I

was piqued, later, by his insensibility to my goodwill. As a matter of fact I did care a little, not desperately; I never had sufficient encouragement, and I do not let my sled go before knowing what is at the bottom of the hill. Mr. Marshall has known me pretty well; knowledge of my benevolent intentions in respect to his business did not seem to please him at all; it did not make him care for me, but rather the contrary. He was so rude that my vanity was hurt, and, as I have already confessed, I am afraid I tried my woman's tricks to see what they were worth. I had much better have saved my self-respect: he was adamant; he cast me off with scorn if not with contumely; there was nothing left for me to do but to use my wits to save the money I had lent—money that he would not keep, in part, long enough to enable him to return the whole."

"You mean that he still owes you money?"

"Yes, but by some accident, a turn of the wheel, the works sold for so much that he will be able to pay me and have enough left to lease the works and to begin again, with a prospect of in time owning them as formerly."

"This did not come about quite by accident, did it? From something my father let drop I have suspected that you had a hand in making Mr. Le Mark pay more than he meant to."

Mary opened her eyes very slowly, fixing them upon Margaret's face with an odd look of intention. She said:

"Before I answer your question do you mind telling me, if I am not indiscreet in asking, why you felt



it necessary to be so careful about Mr. Marshall's—honour, shall I say; so careful that he should not be even unwittingly under an obligation to me?"

"He is my friend."

"Ah! there is where you have the advantage of me; he will neither be my friend nor allow me to be his. I prefer not to admit that I had a part in the affair, but it is true that through the activity of certain persons, who took risks that were not inconsiderable, Mr. Le Mark was compelled to pay nearly twice as much for the works as he intended to pay, very much to Mr. Marshall's advantage, as I have explained."

"Does not Mr. Marshall know to whom he is obliged in this instance?"

"I can hardly admit that either; I can say this, however, Mr. Marshall has not been to see me; I have not seen him since the sale, but I can show you a letter."

Margaret took the letter and read:

MY DEAR MISS ELLERTON:

I should be dull indeed if I failed to appreciate the very clever way in which you have extricated us both from an embarrassing situation. It must certainly seem natural to you, even if it is hard to find a sufficient reason for the feeling, that I should not like to be in your debt for an important sum of money. To be frank, I did not like it at all.

You have got us out of our difficulties with an ingenuity and courage that would make a reputation for a man of business, and you have so managed that instead of being insolvent, and a debtor to a large amount, I have in hand, or soon will have, a capital with which to start again. If I shall not owe you money that I cannot pay, my obligation to you will not

be lessened, but so much increased that should I ever be so fortunate as to have a wife and children, they shall be taught to think of you as a very noble woman, who, with no motive but a generous sympathy for an acquaintance, helped a hard-pressed man, in a controversy with others who were too strong for him, and with so much wit and daring as to save his career and justify a dangerous venture few men would have dared to make.

You are so strong that it is hard to think of you as needing a friend, but I ask you to believe that at any time I shall be grateful for an opportunity to put all I have, and any abilities I may command, entirely at your service. My admiration for you cannot be greater than it is, and my gratitude cannot be diminished by anything that can be said by you or by others.

I am

Very sincerely yours,

THEODORE MARSHALL.

There were tears in Margaret's eyes when she handed back the letter. Mary, who had been watching her as she read, said:

"You see, dear, how it is; he has written me a letter, but he has not been to see me; he does not even want an answer; he will tell his wife and children!"

Margaret reached out and took Mary's hand. At first she could not speak. An arm went round Mary's neck and her friend's head rested upon her shoulder.

"If he only knew you as I do!" Margaret whispered. "Dear friend, I cannot understand it. I cannot see how any one can help loving you. And to have you leave us, after all you have done to help us! To think of your coming here to show me that letter! You surely are a noble woman."

"Oh, no, I am only rich, with a bit of a head for

business. I am glad he cannot teach you to think well of me; you do love me a little, Margaret, do you not, dear? Please do; it does not count for much to have money, but it helps one to be loved a little."

Then Mary shook herself together, leaned over to Margaret, kissed her, and began to speak somewhat briskly.

"Come," she said; "there are things we must talk about, and I shall be very busy before sailing. To begin, you must write to me every week and tell me—everything."

"I will write, dear, but you will have much more to tell in your letters to me."

"Hush! you will have the most important thing in the world to tell. I shall have nothing to confide to you that is not in Baedeker. I must go, but I am sorry to leave Morchester. I was beginning to feel as if I had a niche, or, better, a relation to a place and to a set of people. All my life I have been a stray brick. I thought this last year I was to be laid in a wall, and now I have been knocked off and may never get laid at all."

"You have liked Morchester better since you have been going out?"

"Infinitely better. I am more or less in love with all my acquaintances. Mr. Le Mark is a horrid person, really; but he would not be so bad if he had more brains: he has not the wit to see what a hideous old impostor he is. He represents nothing normal, although his character is made up of grotesque exaggerations of several vices that are practised, more

or less, but usually more adroitly, more delicately, by many of our first citizens. He is vulgar because he is blind; blind because he has no sense of proportion, partly because he has no sense of humour. He takes his pretensions seriously and loses the saving grace of candour with himself. He is a bore, who has been able to frighten people into refusing to admit it. Now that he has been insulted and robbed—I do admit, dear, that I conspired to rob him—he may be less obtrusive. I am almost sorry for him, although I am not sorry that I helped to flout him. I am sorry for him; he has less to suck happiness from than any one I know."

"How about Mr. McLean?" Margaret asked, with a hint of malice or mischief.

"Mr. McLean has honoured me with no little attention; he is far from stupid, but he has not what I should call a solid understanding or a good education; his morals are more or less fluid. I might possibly have saved him from Miss Constance Plunkett and led him to paths of relative virtue by annulling the temptations of a limited income—sad temptations for a politician! Miss Plunkett has the means to do the same, but whether she will be willing to open her purse for the sake of Mr. McLean's morals, I doubt. I fancy the two will join forces and make a restricted world resound. However, they are neither of them worth our serious consideration. You see, I dare talk as to my own soul because I trust you as my soul, and—I am on the point of leaving Morchester.

"You were going to ask me about the Netherbys,

were you not? Yes? Mrs. Netherby is a good friend. She is really a good soul, a little vain on account of her gift of competence. She likes to be a person of importance, and fortunately she is up to the work called for by the situation. She is imposed upon sometimes, but, on the whole, I fancy she gets her share of what she likes.

"If it were not for Mrs. Netherby and her kind, the gaiety of cities and of that part of the country where the well-to-do get together would be, if not eclipsed, sensibly diminished. Far be it from me to judge how much ladies of her kind contribute to the welfare of the race. There is a considerable probability, I should say, that often the activities that are summed up in the phrase 'doing good' may be decidedly mischievous; that often efforts to amuse merely may have beneficent results. Take it for all in all, I fancy a conscientious washerwoman is to be envied her certainty of making the world a sweeter and a cleaner place to dwell in.

"At least, Mrs. Netherby is not inert; she is a centre of energy; unlike Mr. and Mrs. Bob Griswold she can strive. The Bob G.s have only the very unimportant function of deciding how, for their own satisfactions, their income shall be spent. It would be distributed, I suppose, by some one else, if they should leave us, but used it must be, and as it is extremely difficult to know how to employ money wisely, they are almost as likely to do well with it as other persons slightly more intelligent.

"I cannot speak of Mr. Netherby in the vein that has, I see, shocked you, you darling. He does not

take himself seriously, although he is by far the shrewdest and most sensible man I have met in Morchester—your father excepted, of course. He has a penetrating intelligence that sees to the heart of things, and, *par consequence*, he knows pretty well what is worthless and what is really worth while. He is not such a goose as to permit his life to be spoiled by giving his time to the people that cluster about his wife. He gets a better return from the farm and his library. I cannot say whether he is a very useful person on earth, but I am sure that if there is a place of future activity he will take to it an alert and judicious mind, and as honest and kindly a nature as is often developed here below. Mr. Netherby protects himself with scarecrow devices, atrocious manners. It is necessary to study him patiently to penetrate to the real man, but the result of the study is worth the trouble; he is a dear. He and one or two others, of whom your father, you will allow me to say, is one, are the only men I have known in Morchester a knowledge of whom has fortified my faith in the doctrine that men are slowly working out a salvation for the human soul that is nearly attained by now and then one, in order that our courage may not fail.

“You know now how little I have learned from a year of sharp looking out and much meditation. I have come to the belief that a veritably honest man, who goes about his business and is still honest, honest every day, in every detail, honest with himself as well as with his neighbour, is worth almost as much to a community as a museum. The honest man may have

a hard row to hoe, but he has quieter nights than he who steals chickens."

Mary rose and the two women walked toward the house arm in arm; Miss Ellerton did not go in. She asked Margaret to tell the Doctor and Mrs. Lawrence of her change of plans, promising to see them before they left town. She walked swiftly home, braced by a belief that she had finished a chapter in her own life, and corrected the proofs of a love story—the story of two people who were worth the interest she felt in them.

In the hall Margaret found a brief note from Theodore Marshall, saying he was coming to see her that evening; that he wanted to see her alone. He found her on the piazza, and there they returned after a walk of an hour in the grounds; there they said good-night. Margaret went in and supplemented the news, given to her parents at dinner, that Miss Ellerton was going abroad at once—information that did not seem to cause the surprise due to its startling character, except in the soul of Fanny, who was suppressed by her mother—by the announcement that Mr. Marshall had asked her to marry him and had obtained her consent. Fortunately Fanny was soon sent to bed, and Margaret had the long night to dwell upon an hour of that evening, and to see, before anything was said to disturb them, the solemn and beautiful visions of her Eve of St. Agnes.

## Chapter XXXVI

### ON THE DECK OF THE LINER AND ON THE DOWNS

We may seek pleasure abroad, but happiness is most likely to be found at home—if anywhere.

MARSHALL, upon reaching home, after his evening with Margaret Lawrence, took Emily to his little office room and told her quietly of his engagement; it was not a matter about which he cared to talk with his sister until later. She was to tell Miss Thomas.

He also wanted to be alone, for he is not much of a man who is not profoundly moved by the surrender to his keeping of a woman's life. This gift, with love, is a trust that no man sound of heart can receive without honest doubt of his ability righteously to fulfil the obligations he assumes. The surrender is so great a thing that—as some one has said—it should give a temporary dignity to even a commonplace little egotist; to a large heart it is overwhelming bounty, a revelation that sobers and calls to repentance.

Marshall had been faithful to what his "higher instinct knew." With all her cleverness, her charm, the subtle allurements of her personal beauty and of her dexterous mind, he had not cared for Miss Ellerton



in the sense in which he loved Margaret. The respective appeals of the two women had differed as the excitement of a splendid opportunity and the steadiness of a profound purpose. The innate nature of the man, his character, had determined the issue. Margaret had given him her lips; it was enough; at that moment the world had nothing more to offer him. He leant his head upon his desk and made a covenant with his soul. It is a small soul that has not now and then in a lifetime its moments when the depths are stirred.

Marshall saw the Lawrences off for Cape Ann, and two days later he put Emily and Miss Thomas on their way for the same place; they were to go back to their rooms of the previous summer. The Churchills had taken Miss Ellerton's cottage off her hands and were to follow as soon as they could get ready—Churchill to return to duty in the mill when work began there.

The details of the readjustments following the sale of the works had been arranged before the end of the first week in July, and there followed an interval for the drawing of papers that gave Theodore an opportunity to make a brief visit to the North Shore. The Fourth of July fell on Friday. That afternoon Marshall went to New York.

Miss Ellerton's steamer was booked for one o'clock on Saturday. Marshall was at the pier two hours before sailing time; he found that the ladies he had gone to meet were not yet aboard. For over an hour he watched the arriving carriages and was at the door of the one for which he was waiting when it

finally came to a stand. Miss Ellerton had seen him, and she gave him her hand with a ready smile as he helped her out. She was looking fatigued, but she had never looked more strikingly handsome—more a great beauty, and the great lady by right of her personal qualities. Mrs. Thane, of course, needed his particular care in going up the gang-plank. Wraps, small luggage, and maids had to be stowed, cabins found, letters received, the steward interviewed. Miss Ellerton was not free until within a short fifteen minutes of the hour. She stood on the deck with Marshall, leaning against the rail.

"You were very good to come over to say good-bye to me; I had abandoned the hope of seeing you again; I suppose you have lately been very busy."

"I have been busy; I did not know until a few days ago that you thought of leaving us."

"I did not know it myself; I found Morchester too exciting, and I was afraid to risk diluting my impressions of Cape Ann. I delighted in it last summer. Poor Mr. McLean!"

"I don't know what Morchester is to do without you; you cannot fail to see, I suppose, that, if you had not come to my rescue with your pluck and talents, it would be I who should now be on my way—not east, but west—to a ranch or to Alaska or to some other refuge for broken men. I wrote you a stupid letter, but I did not mean to let you escape my personal thanks. It was the magnitude of your good deeds that staggered me at first, and reduced me to letter-writing."

"You wrote me a very fine letter; still, I like to

hear you say that I played a good game. It is not often that a woman has an opportunity to sit at the table where you men of affairs find your excitement. After all, I was not really in it; I only lent you a trifle to give you a chance to work out your system, which seemed to my inexperience a good one."

"Not in it! I venture to disagree; to rout the professionals and to break the bank is as far as any one commonly goes. What I cannot get over is that by some legerdemain I, who had played my last louis d'or,—and lost,—find myself with all your winnings in my pocket."

"Ah, where there are chances the amateur will sometimes have surprising luck, but I should cease to be an amateur if I took more than my loan. We are all square; and you, I understand, have not reformed; you still mean to play?"

"Yes, the habit is confirmed."

"I think you will win in the end. You have the air of a winner. I believe you have already had a fortunate experience and are open to congratulations."

"There is no one from whom they would be more welcome."

"I give them very heartily. I should like a place among your friends; I should have claimed it long ago if you had not insisted upon keeping me among 'acquaintances.' Margaret and I are more than friends; we are almost lovers."

"You are willing we should be friends?"

"Willing! I have striven for the title."

"Very well; it is a compact, and you must take the

consequences. There are reserves that need not stand as between friends. I claim the right to tell you that I know no man nor woman with the brains and heart to do what you have done for me. I know no man with your courage and ability. No man ever possessed your tact and delicacy. You are as good as you are handsome, and a more beautiful or a finer woman is not to be found in a wide world, unless it is she who sent me to give you a message that I have selfishly stolen, appropriated, and present as my own thought, which it is, on my word of honour."

Miss Ellerton was blushing furiously. She drew herself up; her foot tapped the deck. As the colour faded she took a step forward and held out her hand.

"Good-bye, Mr. Marshall."

For a moment they stood hand in hand and eye to eye unflinchingly, then the hands parted and Theodore said gravely:

"Good-bye, Miss Ellerton."

They both turned, and Marshall went down the gang-plank—the last to leave the ship.

The huge bulk of the liner had cleared the dock and swung into the stream. Miss Ellerton, standing by the rail, saw at the extreme end of the pier—upon the stringpiece, with head uncovered—the erect and clean-cut figure of the man she had come near to loving. So they stood until individual figures on the deck or on the pier were no longer distinguishable.

Miss Ellerton's sudden flight across the sea was a shock to Mrs. Netherby and a calamity to her husband. In their different ways each had conceived a great liking for her; Mrs. Netherby felt that as an

ally, even if she could not be absolutely counted upon in all cases, Miss Ellerton greatly strengthened her hand. The elder lady found her vocation on the boards of the Morchester stage; the stock company had lost a brilliant member, and for certain parts it would be difficult to find a worthy substitute.

Mr. Netherby knew that he had been discovered; that he was understood and valued by Miss Ellerton as by no one else. Now it is a fact, emphasising the deathless vanity of men, that no man exults so much in sincere admiration of himself as he who professes indifference to the opinion of others and carries his profession even to the point of making it extremely difficult for any one to give him his due. Mr. Netherby was naturally very much alone in a world he treated with contempt, and jeered at as perverted and ridiculous. He had lost his comrade and was disconsolate. Nothing but a sense of loyalty prevented him from sulking, from refusing to perform the tasks intrusted to him by the fugitive in connection with the settlements between Miss Ellerton, and Marshall and Craft respectively. Until he had heard of Marshall's engagement he was comparatively restrained in his utterances; after the news reached him he was, in his self-communings, nearly rabid. He did not know Margaret Lawrence; he did know his friend. He raged up and down in the confusion of his den, kicking things hither and thither.

"Good God! he might have had her, and he throws her over. Oh, triple ass! 'Bray a fool in a mortar with a pestle'—I hope he may die of a surfeit."

Mr. Craft also was annoyed at Miss Ellerton's

departure. He had planned a whole campaign for reaping what advantage was possible from the accident of meeting her, and he had opened it by sending her an unlimited order, for herself and her friends, giving *entré* to the gallery in his house where his pictures were hung. Her acknowledgment of this and other "courtesies" had enabled him to recognise her handwriting on the envelope shown by Fergus Frank.

It added some difficulties to the business in connection with the mill, that Mr. Craft's interest waned after he learned that Miss Ellerton was to go. Craft had already thought of a wedding present for Mary, should the time come; he did not send one to Margaret. Yet notwithstanding all discouragements, the gentlemen who were pledged to "consummate the deal" performed their parts and in due time Marshall entered into possession.

Meanwhile, he had gone on to Boston and, by a late train on Saturday night, to the Cape. On Sunday afternoon he took Margaret—none offering to show them the way—to the downs on Eastern Point. The point is itself a rock jutting into the sea. It is verdure-clad, as the boulders in the Manchester woods are clothed in delicate ferns. But here and there outcropping ledges show like patches of lichens. There are nooks by these ledges almost as good for privacy as the caves of the sea.

They nestled in sweet fern at the base of a low ledge and rested their backs against its rounded side. The lighthouse, dazzling white in the sun, was away to the right. Before them, as they faced to the east, and to their left, were the wide downs, a broken sur-

face densely covered with varying shades of green—of ferns, rushes, ribbon-like grasses, wild roses, wild growths in infinite variety. Here was a battered tree, topped by winter winds, kept down in every attempt to rise above the dominant low levels; there a thin blue pool, the sun glinting from its surface and joining with the lustres from the leaves in an infectious gaiety, caught by the inshore water that sparkled, beyond the low creaming surf, until the air seemed as much alive as land and sea. Farther to seaward the clear blue deepened to indigo, and the water rocked into waves that occasionally lost their heads in white cotton night-caps.

The horizon line swept from north to south, from south to north, in a great true curve of splendid certitude. Piled on a level base above this line were cumulus clouds, matchlessly white where the sun fell full, and of delicate ashen greys in the shadows. A fishing schooner rounded the point, and, if the sound did not really reach their ears, they seemed to hear the good-humoured slapping of the waves at her bow. They could see the seams in the sails and the spokes of the wheel. Far out were sails, some dull and dark as Grey Friars' frocks; others, in the splendour of their whiteness, like the stoles of archangels.

Then the delicious clean salt air—good to draw deep into the lungs and let escape in a sigh of complete contentment! Cities and their ways seemed trivial on Eastern Point that afternoon, compared to the liberal scheme of downs and sky and sea and health and love.

At first the lovers had little to say; it was

enough to see and to feel. Margaret was the first to speak.

"What are you thinking about?"

"I was thinking," Theodore answered, "that straight out there, perhaps two hundred miles over the water, there is a big ship thrashing her way to the north-east."

"I know," Margaret said. "I was thinking of the ship and of a dear friend. She is in a deck chair under an awning. She has been reading, but her book has fallen to her lap, and her head, as it rests on the back of her chair, is turned towards us and she is smiling as she sees us here on the downs. She has a great heart; she has let it lead her, and she is not unhappy; she gave us our happiness and she is too great for misgivings, for regrets, or for fretting."

"Yes, she is in the grand style—body and soul."

"Theodore, I say, God bless her."

"I say, Amen."

THE END

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